Beyond the Flâneur
Walking, Passage and Crossing in London and Paris in the Nineteenth Century

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À mes parents

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Abstract

Beyond the *Flâneur*: Walking, Passage and Crossing in London and Paris in the Nineteenth Century

This thesis examines reworkings of the *flâneur* in France and Britain during the nineteenth century (1806-1869). It suggests that before it was made famous by Baudelaire, this urban observer emerged out of French and British print culture, and of crossings between them. It has endured because it is a protean, composite figure which weaves in and out of literature, journalism and essays. Its roots in print, the thesis argues, fostered a form of cross-cultural pollination which ensured the power and persistence of the figure.

Given the metamorphosis of the *flâneur* from 'type' to literary character to 'critical concept,' the thesis looks at *flânerie* as a fluid concept which demands both rigour and a possibility of going astray. My corpus reflects this flexibility since it includes newspapers and physiologies, as well as works by De Quincey, Dickens, Brontë, Balzac and Baudelaire.

The thesis is chronologically structured, and begins with a study of the *flâneur*'s origins, exploring how the early Parisian *flâneur* of the press and physiologies finds predecessors and descendants in the London press. Chapter 2 demonstrates how the *flâneur* is rooted in the British and French collective literary imagination and is thus inextricably linked to other gazing figures whose traits he adopts and discards as he moves seamlessly through time. Chapter 3 examines how ever-evolving optical technologies profoundly altered the *flâneur*'s 'ways of seeing.' Chapter 4 is a phenomenological exploration of walking, demonstrating that the flâneur's gaze is also created through a living, moving body embedded in time and space. The final chapter introduces the concept of *croisement*, a heuristic device I develop to understand the role of the *flâneur* as *passeur* and go-between and re-read the literary history of *flânerie* as one of constant crossings and crossovers. It concludes that the *flâneur*'s permanent in-betweenness or 'out-of-jointness' makes him 'contemporary'[1] – more capable than others of grasping his own time.

[1] Giorgio Agamben, 'What is the contemporary?' in *Nudities*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp.10-19.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for frequently cited works, which are given parenthetically throughout.

AP : Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin MacLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass., London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999, 2002)

CB : Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London, New York: Verso Editions, 1973, 1989)

SBB : Charles Dickens, *Sketches by Boz* [1839], ed. Dennis Walder (London: Penguin Classics, 1995)

OCS : Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* [1841] (London: Penguin Classics, 2000)

C : Thomas de Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and Other Writings* [1821], ed. Grevel Lindop (Oxford, New York: OUP, 1985)

MOC : Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Man of the Crowd' in *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. J. Gerald Kennedy (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006)

Translations

Unless indicated otherwise in footnotes, all the translations of the French quotations into English are mine.

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Introduction

The figure of the *flâneur* – the leisurely but vigilant observer of urban life – is most famed for being a nineteenth-century Parisian archetype. The work of the twentieth-century historian Walter Benjamin has established this stroller of Parisian Boulevards as the figurehead for novelists and poets such as Balzac and Baudelaire. However, in the nineteenth century, the meaning of this urban figure was far from settled, as Victor Fournel reminds us:

> Je voudrais bien commencer par tracer ici la théorie de la flânerie; mais ce qui distingue cette théorie de toutes les autres, c'est qu'elle n'existe pas, c'est qu'elle ne peut exister. La flânerie, science aimable qui se révèle d'instinct aux initiés, vit d'imprévu et de libre arbitre.[1]

Fournel's 1855 statement crystallises the instability of the concept of *flânerie* and highlights the difficulty that is inherent in any attempt at defining it. A figure which has been reconceived and misconceived, the *flâneur* is a powerful presence within nineteenth-century culture. Since he began walking the Parisian boulevards and arcades, he has known constant translations, transformations and transpositions. Indeed, the *flâneur* has become a concept which has exported itself outside of its century, of the city that is identified with its birth, and of the field of literature. Through its many different versions, the *flâneur* has evolved into a decisive critical category.

One of the starting points of this thesis is the observation that the *flâneur* is constantly undergoing different incarnations. Whilst many critics have proposed different versions of the *flâneur*, no one has accounted for the diffuseness of the category. With this in mind, this work goes back to the origins of the *flâneur* and traces the metamorphoses of the figure in order to reach a fuller understanding of its complexity. It suggests that the *flâneur* has endured precisely because it is a protean, composite type who weaves in and out of essays, journalism and literature, one that crosses borders, and provides a way to apprehend and comprehend urban modernity. Understanding the reasons for the persistence and power of the *flâneur* is

[1] Victor Fournel, *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris* [1855] (Paris: Adolphe Delahays, 1858), 263. 'I would like to start here by outlining the theory of *flânerie* – but what distinguishes this theory from all others is that it does not exist, it cannot exist. *Flânerie*, this amiable science which reveals itself instinctively to connoisseurs, lives off the unexpected and free will.'

essential, since *flânerie* provides a way to apprehend an urban modernity that is still very much with us today.

However, any claim to establish a new perspective on the *flâneur* must be made within the framework of existing scholarship. The translation into English and publication of Walter Benjamin's *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*[2] in 1973, and *The Arcades Project* in 1999[3] were influential in generating a vast production of critical work on the *flâneur*. This work has often spilled across different disciplines and methodologies, leading to a range of overlapping but distinct definitions. In this context, elucidating the critical history of the figure seems indispensable.

Tracking critical traffic: the *flâneur* in theory

Our contemporary understanding of the *flâneur* is largely based on the way it has been reshaped by Anglo-Saxon criticism since Benjamin's work was made available to English-speaking scholars. Thus, to understand the history of recent scholarship about the *flâneur*, one must start by examining Benjamin's intricate and sometimes contradictory thinking about the *flâneur*.

In the relevant section in *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*,[4] Benjamin retraces what he sees as the very brief existence of the *flâneur*. However, in so doing, he seems to describe different kinds of *flâneurs*. Benjamin's earliest *flâneur* is the *physiologue*, the observer of urban life who wrote the physiologies of the 1830s and 1840s. Physiologies were anthologies of 'types' which might be encountered on the Parisian streets. For him, the writer or *physiologue* who produced these 'innocuous' and 'apolitical' sketches 'fit[s] the style of the *flâneur* who goes botanizing on the asphalt' (CB, 36). The inorganic asphalt, here, is linked with nature and botany; the *flâneur* is seen as a categorizing figure, a collector of 'types' – or specimens – going on a botanical adventure in

[2] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (CB), trans. Harry Zohn (London, New York: Verso Editions, 1973, 1989).
[3] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (AP), trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin MacLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass., London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999, 2002). Eiland and MacLaughlin editing and ordering of the material with the help of Ralph Tiedemann's readings and analysis of the shape of the work have been hugely influential in recent years.
[4] CB, II, pp. 35-66.

urban space. This early, archetypal *flâneur* was able to wander leisurely around the Parisian *passages* or arcades, but also to 'turn a boulevard into an *intérieur*' (CB, 37) by 'mak[ing] out the profession, the character, the background, and the life-style of passers-by' (CB, 39). For Benjamin, this *flâneur*'s role was to turn the threatening, fast-changing urban scape into a knowable, readable space, thereby offering reassurance to his petit bourgeois public.

However, Benjamin noted that the public interest in this categorizing figure was short-lived: 'the soothing little remedies the physiologies offered for sale were soon passé' (CB, 40). The second *flâneur* identified by Benjamin was in fact Baudelaire himself. Unlike the *flâneur* of the physiologies, Baudelaire was a sort of transcendental *flâneur* involved in an aesthetic quest. For Benjamin, Baudelaire was the ideal *flâneur*, who could be defined, in Baudelaire's own words, as 'the painter of the passing moment and of all that the suggestions of eternity that it contains.'[5] He was the poet who did not feel at home in the crowd, and yet rejoiced in its anonymity while perceiving its deeply alienating nature. However, Benjamin makes of Baudelaire an anachronism, a figure on the brink of extinction: 'he roved about in the city which had long ceased to be home for the *flâneur*' (CB, 47). For him, two factors would soon bring about the death of the *flâneur*. Baudelaire perceived the crowd as the 'asylum of outlaws' (CB, 55), but in a city where networks of control were growing ever tighter, *flânerie* would soon become impossible. Haussmann's rationalization of the city – standardizing measures such as house-numbering, street-lighting and the construction of wide boulevards – would establish the meaning and order of things in advance and would eradicate the element of mystery inherent to the city. The second reason Benjamin gives to explain the *flâneur*'s impending demise is that of his resemblance with 'the situation of the commodity' (CB, 55). For Benjamin, the *flâneur*/writer such as Baudelaire 'goes to the marketplace as *flâneur*, supposedly to take a look at it, but in reality to find a buyer' (CB, 34). The *flâneur*'s 'empathy with the commodity [… and] exchange value' (AP, 448) would bring about his early demise, and the department store would be the *flâneur*'s death warrant: 'The bazaar is the last hangout for the *flâneur*. […] He roamed through the labyrinth of the merchandise as he had once roamed through the labyrinth of the city' (CB, 54).

[5] Charles Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', in Claude Pichois (ed.), *Charles Baudelaire, Œuvres Complètes*, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Collection 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade', 1975), vol. 2, 687. 'Il est le peintre de la circonstance et de tout ce qu'elle suggère d'éternel.' (*The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (New York: Phaidon Press, 1995), 5.)

However, it seems that Benjamin changed his mind about the subject, and a third *flâneur* returns in his writing. In 'The Return of the Flâneur' – a review of a 1929 book entitled *Spazieren in Berlin*[6] by German writer Franz Hessel – Benjamin states that *flânerie* has not disappeared after all: 'What [Hessel's writing] reveals is the endless spectacle of *flânerie* that we thought had been finally relegated to the past. And can it be reborn here, in Berlin of all places, where it never really flourished?'[7] In his analysis of Franz Hessel's writing, Benjamin finds that Hessel's footsteps conjure up not only personal memories, but also images belonging to the past of the city. *Flânerie* calls forth both the personal and the collective past. Benjamin develops this idea further in section M of *The Arcades Project*, which is entitled 'The Flâneur,' in which he explains that the true *flâneur* is able to recover or recollect the past: 'the street conducts the *flâneur* into a vanished time […]. In the asphalt over which he passes, his steps awaken a surprising resonance' (AP [M1, 2], 416). *The Arcades Project* shows that there are many parallels to be drawn between Benjamin's own method of enquiry into the past and the *flâneur*'s. Benjamin also insists on the quintessentially Parisian nature of *flânerie*: 'Paris created the type of the *flâneur*. […] For it is not the foreigners but they themselves, the Parisians, who have made Paris the promised land of the *flâneur*.' (AP, [M1, 4], 417). However, his writing is interspersed with references to London writers, which is an element this study will explore further. He mentions Engels, Shelley and Poe in *Charles Baudelaire* and refers to Dickens's flâneurial habits in both texts (CB, 49; AP 438). He also explicitly notes the connections which exist between the *imaginaire* surrounding both capitals:

> If one compares Baudelaire's discussion of Meryon with Barbier's 'London' one asks oneself whether the gloomy image of 'la noire majesté de la plus inquiétante des capitales'– the image, that is, of Paris – was not materially determined by the texts of Barbier and of Poe. London was certainly ahead of Paris in industrial development (AP [M19a, 2], 452).

This preliminary survey highlights the extremely diverse and sometimes contradictory nature of Benjamin's thinking about the *flâneur*. As John Rignall points out, 'although

[6] Franz Hessel, *Spazieren in Berlin* [*Walks through Berlin*] (Leipzig and Vienna: Verlag Dr. Hans Epstcin, 1929).
[7] Walter Benjamin, 'The Return of the Flâneur' [1929], in Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith (eds.), *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings II, 1927-1934*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1999), 264.

Benjamin refers to his "theory" of the *flâneur*, it is difficult to discern anything like a coherent single theory in the various ideas which cluster around that composite and over-determined figure.'[8] The extraordinary wealth of material and the brilliance of many of Benjamin's insights explain why his work has established the critical benchmark for scholarly discussion about the *flâneur*. However, the fragmented nature of his approach also explains why criticism has tended to take Benjamin's thoughts in many different directions. Historians, literary critics and art critics alike have drawn on Benjamin's material to cast the *flâneur* as a historical type, a literary character, or a figure inaugurating a new aesthetic regime. This work proposes that Benjamin's hesitations around the figure point up the elusive and polymorphous nature of the *flâneur*, even though Benjamin himself never casts him in this light. The other element I would like to draw attention to in Benjamin's approach is that although he claims the *flâneur* is an entirely Parisian figure, London-based material is a recurrent presence in his writing about the *flâneur*. This may hint at the fact that from its very beginnings, the geography of *flânerie* may have extended beyond the limits of Paris.

The way Walter Benjamin viewed the history of the *flâneur* and created different categories for him is replicated and intensified in the vast amount of criticism that has been produced on the subject. Moreover, most of these critical works take up one aspect of the *flâneur*, but very few have tried to think of different versions of the *flâneur* in relation to each other. Instead, many critics have tended to contain the *flâneur* within certain fixed parameters. I am now going to give a brief overview of the sorts of categories of *flâneurs* which have been created – or recreated.

In recent years, several critics have been interested in the world of journalism and print culture from which Benjamin's 'first *flâneur*' emerged. These critics insist that the *flâneur* was born of the feuilletons, periodicals and serial collections which were produced in the first half of the nineteenth century. They focus on revaluing the earlier, journalistic sources conceptualizing the *flâneur*, and in particular the physiologies, which Benjamin dismissed as 'innocuous' (CB, 36). The argument is consistently made that the physiologies are a source of great value in understanding nineteenth-century modernity. For Richard

[8] John Rignall, *Realist Fiction and the Strolling Spectator* (London, New York: Routledge, 1992), 9.

Sieburth[9] for instance, these quickly-produced and reproduced texts and images constantly point to their own reproducibility, reflexivity and self-reflexivity, and the *flâneur* is the embodiment of these concerns. In her 2007 book *Sketches of the Nineteenth Century: European Journalism and its Physiologies, 1830-50*, Martina Lauster focuses on verbal and visual representations of the pre-1850 *flâneur*, whom she sees as a demystifying figure, 'one of a countless number of ordinary city dwellers who read metropolitan surfaces.'[10] These works are important because they have redressed the critical imbalance between Benjamin's first *flâneur* (the *physiologue*) and his second *flâneur* (Baudelaire), as many critics have tended to focus solely on the Baudelairean *flâneur*. However, looking at the *flâneur* only through its print sources, as these critics do, confines the focus of attention on the early *flâneur*.

Other critics have considered the overall story of the nineteenth-century *flâneur*, but once again, the distinctions which Benjamin put in place are adhered to, with restrictive effect. In her panoramic survey of the history of *flânerie*, Margaret Rose retraces the history of the *flâneur*/*physiologue* in great detail before focusing on Baudelaire and Hessel,[11] but simply replicates Benjamin's categories. Richard Burton sees the pre-1850 *flâneur* as a 'reader of urban life,' a 'roving empiricist,' while he sees the *flâneur*'s post-1850 incarnation – the *homme des foules* of the Second Empire and beyond – as 'little less than a visionary.' 'Whereas the pre-1850 *flâneur* strives to understand the individual Other in his or her otherness, the *homme des foules*, as described by Baudelaire, seeks to lose all selfhood in a quasi-mystic (or quasi-orgasmic) fusion with *la foule* considered as an undifferentiated and anonymous mass.'[12] Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson sees 1848 – the time of the Third French Revolution – as a moment of radical shift, and speaks about 'the reconfiguration of the *flâneur* at mid-century.'[13] Mary Gluck also distinguishes between these two *flâneurs*:

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[9] Richard Sieburth, 'Same Difference: The French Physiologies, 1840-1842' in Norman Cantor (ed.), *Notebooks in Cultural analysis I*, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1984), pp. 163–200.
[10] Martina Lauster, *Sketches of the Nineteenth Century: European Journalism and its Physiologies, 1830-50* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 8-9.
[11] Margaret A. Rose (ed.), *Flâneurs & Idlers: Louis Huart, 'Physiologie du flâneur' (1841); Albert Smith, 'The Natural History of the Idler upon Town' (1848)* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2007).
[12] Richard D. E. Burton, *The Flâneur and his City, Patterns of Daily Life in Paris 1815-1851* (Durham: University of Durham Press, 1994), 5.
[13] Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth-Century City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 81. 'The debacle of 1848 and the radical disruption of urban renewal in the Second Empire turned the genial ambulatory philosopher of the July Monarchy into a key figure of loss within a larger

> There actually existed two separate, though interconnected, formulaic narratives about *flânerie*, which have rarely been distinguished from each other. The first is that of the popular *flâneur*, which emerged on the pages of the mass circulation newspapers and commercial press of the 1840s and came to embody the ideals of a dynamic urban culture and sensibility. The second is what I shall call the avant-garde *flâneur*, which found its most vivid embodiment in Baudelaire's critical texts of the 1850s and 1860s and gave expression to the aestheticist vision of innovative artists and poets.[14]

What is interesting in Gluck's approach is that she points to the parallels and connections between these two *flâneurs* to destabilize 'assumptions about both modernity as a cultural experience and modernism as an aesthetic project. The centrality of *flânerie* for both popular and avant-garde identities suggests that the boundaries between modernist art and popular culture were more porous than has been hitherto imagined.'[15] The article hints at the capacity of the *flâneur* to evolve and renew itself. On the whole, however, these critics tend to uphold the distinction established by Benjamin between the *flâneur* of the physiologies and the post-1850 *flâneur*. What also emerges from this survey is that depending on which sources critics base their analysis on, they obtain entirely different versions of the *flâneur*. One important reason for which this study differs from previous works on the subject and makes a contribution to the field is the wide scope of its primary corpus. Rather than drawing on well-travelled Benjaminian material, this corpus calls upon a great variety of sources. This inclusive approach offers a much wider view of the history of *flânerie*.

Another prevailing critical stance is to focus on the idea of the *flâneur* as an aesthete, and to do so, rely heavily on Benjamin's second *flâneur*, the Baudelairean *flâneur*. Ross Chambers reads him along these lines; for him, the story of *flânerie* starts with Baudelaire, whose role is to capture 'the phantom of beauty.'[16] Indeed, the most widely-circulated image of the *flâneur* is that of the Baudelairean aesthete, an emblem of modernity and even a predecessor of modernist alienation or postmodernist fragmentation. For Yves Bonnefoy, the *flâneur* created by Baudelaire (and Poe before him) crystallises the sense of ontological

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'discourse of displacement'. Baudelaire's ambivalent *flâneur* already illustrates a significant move from the triumphant Balzacian figure, but it is Flaubert who represents *flânerie* as a form of dispossession.'

[14] Mary Gluck, 'The Flâneur and the Aesthetic Appropriation of Urban Culture in Mid-19th-Century Paris', *Theory Culture Society*, 20, 5 (2003), 53–80, (p. 54).

[15] Gluck, 55.

[16] Ross Chambers, *Loiterature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 15.

anxiety which characterizes the modern city: 'Poe entrevoit que ce vieillard perambulans in tenebris, c'est le néant, l'être humain comme néant, l'intrusion dans la société d'une façon d'accepter de ne pas être qui risque d'entraîner dans son gouffre l'idée même d'humanité.'[17] This image points ahead to the modernist vision of a city of the undead. Baudelaire's 'baths of multitude' cannot dispel the sense of solitude produced by the city. Bonnefoy sees the *flâneur* as an emblem of alienation which heralds a modernist, aesthetic concept of self-loss. Although it is important to stress and recognize that *flânerie* announces a form of aesthetics which would be further developed at the beginning of the twentieth century, these critics seem to base themselves solely on what is being written about the *flâneur* from the Baudelairean moment onwards.[18] What's more, they seem to be looking at *flânerie* backwards, that is, through the lens of the modernists, through the rubble of a traumatic past, much like Benjamin's angel of history.[19] This study will try to remain blind to or at least suspend the modernist lens. I will reverse this critical viewpoint and adopt a different perspective altogether. Rather than rather reading the *flâneur* from a fixed point, standing at the end of time, I will adopt a position which enables me instead to map out the evolutions of the *flâneur*. We will be walking alongside or rather behind him, like a shadow following in his footsteps, tracking and recording the changes that affect him. We will examine what happened before the *flâneur* came into being, and travel with the *flâneur* as he changes, dies and is resurrected.

Other critics have observed that the question of the *flâneur* is a gendered concept and have addressed this through a series of writings that have looked at the female *flâneur*. Indeed, feminist critics have approached the question of female *flânerie* and have wondered

[17] Yves Bonnefoy, *Le poète et « le flot mouvant des multitudes »* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2003), 122. 'Poe understands that this old man walking through the darkness *is* nothingness, humanity as nothingness, the acceptance by society of non-being, which might drag the very idea of humanity into its abyss.'

[18] Or more detail about the *flâneur* as the precursor of a twentieth-century aesthetic regime, see Anke Gleber, *The Art of Taking a Walk* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), and Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues, *Propos sur la flânerie* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2009).

[19] Walter Benjamin, 'Ninth Thesis on the Philosophy of History' in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Pimlico, 1999), 249. 'A Klee drawing named "Angelus Novus" shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe that keeps piling ruin upon ruin and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.'

whether *flâneuses* could and did exist in the nineteenth century. For Janet Wolff,[20] Griselda Pollock and Susan Buck-Morss,[21] the sexual divisions of the nineteenth century made it impossible for the *flâneuse* to exist. They insist on women's lack of freedom to walk and gaze in the nineteenth century. For Pollock, the *flâneur* is 'an exclusively masculine type which functions within the matrix of bourgeois ideology through which the social spaces of the city were reconstructed by the overlaying of the doctrine of separate spheres on to the division of public and private which became as a result a gendered division.'[22] For Buck-Morss and Wolff, it was virtually impossible to have a *flâneuse* because the female version of *flânerie* was prostitution. While it is crucial to recognize and stress the gender imbalance which pervaded every layer of social life in the nineteenth-century, their approach does not allow for exceptions – thus precluding the very possibility of female *flânerie*. Drawing on literary accounts of female *flânerie*, this study will show that the *flâneur*'s polymorphous nature allows for a fluctuating gender base, even in the nineteenth century.

Indeed, other critics have claimed that some *flâneuses*, although they were indeed exceptions, not only existed, but created feminine, idiosyncratic ways of apprehending the city. Deborah Epstein Nord has examined Elizabeth Gaskell's walking figures. For her, a particular vision of the female observer and walker emerges in Gaskell's writing, derived 'from her consciousness of transgression and trespassing, from the vexed sexuality her position implies, and from her struggle to escape the status of spectacle and become a spectator.'[23] Catherine Nesci has examined the cases of Delphine de Girardin, George Sand (who famously dressed as a man to be able to circulate freely in the city), and Flora Tristan, whom she sees as examples of '*antiflâneurs*.'[24] As the century progressed, the social rights of women increased, and so too did their freedom. *Flânerie* was made easier for women, and one finds more and more *flâneuses* in literature from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards. Deborah L. Parsons's approach is particularly interesting: she studies cases of

[20] Janet Wolff, 'The Invisible *Flâneuse*. Women and the Literature of Modernity', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2 (November 1985), 37–46.
[21] Susan Buck-Morss, 'The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering', *New German Critique*, no. 39 (Autumn 1986), 99–140.
[22] Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 67.
[23] Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation and the City* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 12.
[24] Catherine Nesci, *Le Flâneur et les flâneuses: les femmes et la ville à l'époque romantique* (Grenoble: ELLUG, Bibliothèque stendhalienne et romantique, 2007), 11.

female *flânerie* in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, but starts with the recognition that 'the concept of the *flâneur* itself contains gender ambiguities that suggest the figure to be a site for the contestation of male authority rather than the epitome of it.'[25] These approaches, and Parsons's in particular, allow for a sort of malleability in the concept of *flânerie*. The models of female *flânerie* they explore bend, rework and extend the scope and definition of the word. They bring to the fore the question of the gender of the *flâneur*. The pronoun 'he' will remain under scrutiny throughout the thesis, given the many metamorphoses of the *flâneur* from 'he' to 'she' to 'it' – from 'type' to literary character to *flâneuse* to critical concept. We will remain open to the problem of this 'he', and as we go along, redefine and rethink the pronoun used to designate the *flâneur*. This thesis will argue that *flânerie* is a concept which lets itself be reshaped and remodelled, and which even encourages this form of flexibility.

Indeed, more recently, some have argued in favour of a less rigid understanding of *flânerie*. Catherine Nesci has tracked very precisely the different changes that have affected the Parisian *flâneur* throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and speaks about his 'spectacular transfiguration.'[26] She also points out that 'recent scholarship about Walter Benjamin has transformed the *flâneur* into an analytical category, or even into the double of the philosopher, the sociologist or the historian, seeing him as a rag-picker creating history from the very refuse of history.'[27] David Frisby has also stressed the multi-layered nature of the *flâneur*, and by using Benjamin's example, has shown that *flânerie* itself is a method which contributes to sociological knowledge and to our understanding of modernity.[28] Chris Jenks describes the *flâneur* as a complex and versatile entity which cannot be pinned down, 'a multi-layered palimpsest,'[29] both a product of modernity and 'an attempt to see modernity; a metaphor for method.'[30] For him, the *flâneur* is 'no concrete reality, a social phenomenon trapped by the essentialism of a materialist critic. It is an alternative "vision" […] bred of

[25] Deborah L. Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
[26] Nesci, *Le Flâneur et les flâneuses*, 65.
[27] Nesci, *Le Flâneur et les flâneuses*, 53. 'Les études récentes sur Walter Benjamin ont transformé le flâneur en catégorie analytique, voire en double du philosophe, du sociologue ou de l'historien comme chiffonnier salvateur créant de l'histoire à partir des "détritus" mêmes de l'histoire.'
[28] David Frisby, *Cityscapes of Modernity: Critical Explorations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001).
[29] Chris Jenks, 'Watching your Step: The History and Practice of the *Flâneur*', in Chris Jenks (ed.), *Visual Culture* (NY: Routledge, 1995), pp. 142–160, (p. 148).
[30] Jenks, 146.

modernity but equally adaptive, by virtue of its "cold" stance, to the fragmentations of late-modernity.'[31] Similarly, Werner also remarks that the *flâneur* 'has proven remarkably flexible as a theoretical lens on modernity and post-modernity.'[32] These approaches not only bring out the flexibility of *flânerie*, their insistence on *flânerie*'s capacity to produce alternative 'visions' and 'discourses' explains why *flânerie* remains a valid concept for critical theorists today. Although these critics refer mostly to twentieth-century material, their emphasis on the *flâneur*'s critical gaze is crucial, and I shall draw on their flexible approach to the definition of *flânerie* to reread the story of the nineteenth-century *flâneur* as one of crossings and crossovers.

Finally, several scholars have taken Benjamin's intuition about the links between Paris and London further by investigating the cosmopolitan nature of the *flâneur* and by looking at the traffic of print and ideas which took place between both capitals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Jonathan Conlin's recently-published *Tales of Two Cities: Paris, London and the Birth of the Modern City*[33] highlights the importance of the connections between the two capitals and retraces their *histoire croisée* during the eighteenth century. He argues that 'Benjamin's conclusion that Paris created the *flâneur* […] happens to be incorrect,'[34] and that the *flâneur* was actually an early eighteenth-century English construct. Dana Brand's more nuanced approach points to the mixed origins of the *flâneur*: 'The manners and strategies Walter Benjamin associated with the *flâneur* may be found throughout the literature of Europe long before the late 1830s. […] The *flâneur* is as English a phenomenon as he is a French one, and it was primarily from England that he was imported to America.'[35] The idea that London might have influenced the construction of the *flâneur* as much as Paris is also something which Michael Sheringham, amongst other critics, has stressed.[36] He has demonstrated how

[31] Jenks, 149.
[32] James W. Werner, *American Flâneur, The Cosmic Physiognomy of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York & London: Routledge, 2004), 1.
[33] Jonathan Conlin, *Tales of Two Cities: Paris, London and the Birth of the Modern City* (London: Atlantic books, 2013).
[34] Conlin, *Tales of Two Cities* E-book, no page number. 'The first *flâneur* was not Baudelaire's "passionate spectator", but Joseph Addison's and Richard Steele's Mr Spectator, the eponymous editor of their periodical, *The Spectator*.'
[35] Dana Brand, *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), 13.
[36] On the links between De Quincey, Poe and Baudelaire in the construction of the *flâneur*, see also Matthew Beaumont, Gregory Dart (eds.), *Restless Cities* (London, New York: Verso, 2010). Yves Bonnefoy, *Le poète et « le flot mouvant des multitudes »* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2003). Emily B. Stanback, 'Peripatetic

the influences of De Quincey and Poe on Baudelaire and in turn, of Baudelaire on Anglo-Saxon high modernism, 'illustrate the extent to which Paris and London have, for more than two centuries, provided mirrors or echo-chambers for each other.'[37] For him, the *flâneur* was born out of this ongoing two-way process. Lauster's and Rose's studies of early-nineteenth-century *flânerie*[38] also encompass a large geographical field, moving from portraits of the *flâneurs* of Paris to those of their counterparts in London and Berlin, while Mary Gluck has looked at the history of *flânerie* in Budapest.[39] Critical work focusing on the links between the figure of the Parisian *flâneur* and Charles Dickens has also reinforced the emphasis on the connection between Paris and London.[40] Of course, since the nineteenth century, the *flâneur* has moved on and has become a cosmopolitan figure 'used to illuminate issues of city life irrespective of time and place,'[41] as his ubiquity in twentieth and twenty-first century literature and criticism confirms. *Flânerie* has been adapted outside of France and indeed Europe: we find modern echoes of the figure in contemporary novels showing us modern *flâneurs* stepping out in foreign cities, but also in critical works which adopt and adapt the flâneurial gaze. I will attempt to develop the idea that this exportability of the *flâneur*, which becomes obvious in the twentieth century, is something which is already part of the makeup of his nineteenth-century predecessor.

Beyond the *flâneur*: crossings and crossovers

The present thesis draws on many of these studies, and owes much to the findings of several generations of scholars. At the same time, the project has a specific focus of its own. This thesis will attempt to read *flânerie* against the grain, to look awry at *flânerie*, and will do so in three different ways. First, it will try to suspend the modernist lens through which many critics still gaze at the *flâneur*. We will seek to go back in time unhindered by modernist

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in the City: De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* and the Birth of the *Flâneur*', *Literature Compass*, vol. 10, issue 2 (February 2013), 146–161.

[37] Michael Sheringham, 'The Key of the Street': "London" in the Construction of "Paris"', *Synergies*, no. 3 (2010), 37–44, (p. 37).

[38] See Margaret A. Rose, *Flâneurs & Idlers*, and Lauster, *Sketches of the Nineteenth Century*.

[39] Mary Gluck, 'The Budapest Flâneur: Urban Modernity, Popular Culture, and the "Jewish Question" in Fin-de-Siècle Hungary', *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, (Spring/Summer 2004, New Series), pp. 1-22.

[40] See Michael Hollington, 'Charles Dickens, Citoyen de Paris', paper given at the Colloque de Cerisy, 26 August 2011. Colin Jones, 'French Crossings: I. Tale of Two Cities', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 6, 20 (2010), 1–26. Gillian Piggott, *Dickens and Benjamin: Moments of Revelation, Fragments of Modernity* (Burlington: Ashgate, Nineteenth Century Series, 2012).

[41] Keith Tester (ed.), *The Flâneur* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 16.

thinking, trying to recreate not just the time but the mindset of the time in which the *flâneur* is walking, to see things as he saw them, without ascribing to him the modernist gaze which might skew the perspective. Through this method, I hope to track the many changes which reshaped the figure throughout the nineteenth century. Secondly, this thesis will examine a wide variety of printed and literary sources to obtain a broader view of the history of the *flâneur* and to avoid recasting him into fixed Benjaminian categories. Thirdly, it will adopt an inclusive geographical approach. It will look for the *flâneur* in but also away from Parisian literature. The thesis begins by recognizing that cosmopolitanism is part of the make-up of the *flâneur*. It acknowledges that the field in which the *flâneur* develops is not limited to Paris or London, that there is a porous, expanded field for the conversation about the *flâneur*, although for the sake of precision as well as concision, this study mainly focuses on these two cities. However, the aim of this work is not to track the to-and-fro print traffic between France and England, as other critics have done.[42] The thesis will be using material from both countries throughout, accepting that there are diversified manifestations of the *flâneur* on both sides of the channel, and that he belongs to a kind of cosmopolitan culture.

The corpus reflects this structural and geographical flexibility since it includes a very broad range of material. It surveys a profusion of printed texts, newspapers and physiologies, since originally, the *flâneur* emerged from and belonged to technologies of print. It also incorporates works such as Thomas De Quincey's autobiography, Edgar Allan Poe's short stories, novels by Honoré de Balzac, Charles Dickens and Charlotte Brontë, as well as some of Charles Baudelaire's poems and essays. While focusing on a core of texts dating from the period which spans between 1806 (which corresponds to the first known use of the word *flâneur*) and 1869 (which is the year of publication of Baudelaire's *Petits poèmes en prose*), the corpus will at certain times extend both back and forward in time, since *flânerie* itself demands this form of movement and flexibility. For this reason, it will also include eighteenth-century material by writers such as Joseph Addison, Richard Steele and Louis-Sébastien Mercier, or twentieth century works by writers such as Virginia Woolf and Walter Benjamin himself. This inclusive corpus will enable me not to confine the *flâneur* to only one of his identities.

[42] See Jonathan Conlin, *Tales of Two Cities*, and Margaret A. Rose, *Flâneurs & Idlers*.

Adopting this methodology – looking at the *flâneur* awry – will enable me to demonstrate that the *flâneur* acquired his critical gaze and important critical position within modernity because he is both a cross between different figures and a figure who crosses thresholds, as well as an agent who performs crosses. This 'crossing' nature accounts for the remarkable persistence and power of this figure within urban modernity, throughout and beyond the nineteenth century. This thesis thus starts by demonstrating that the *flâneur* is a composite figure which was constructed overtime through successive crossings. It then goes on to show how the *flâneur* operates in this transitioning way through repeated acts of crossing, constantly queering geography, media and genres. It reveals the ways in which *flânerie* is a category which is always surpassing itself, in an exalted, positive way, but also leaving itself behind. The notion of *flânerie* is in itself a metamorphosis, an inflection, a wondering and wandering, so that the subject demands rigor but at the same time a sort of flexibility and a possibility of 'going astray.'[43]

To facilitate the survey of the *flâneur*'s sundry incarnations and multiple transformations, the thesis is chronologically structured, and divided into five chapters. The first chapter retraces the prehistory and genesis of the *flâneur* by going back to its eighteenth and early nineteenth-century roots and delving into its mixed origins in terms of geography, medium, and genre. It demonstrates that the *flâneur*'s roots in print fostered a form of cross-cultural pollination which started in the early eighteenth century and increased in volume and speed with the improvement of print technologies in the nineteenth century. The chapter also illustrates how this interconnectedness with the world of print meant that the *flâneur* moved swiftly from one medium to the next – from essays, to newspapers, to physiologies, to the pages of novels. The *flâneur*'s constitutive crossings created a particular way of gazing at the city, which I go on to explore in the following chapter. The second chapter investigates the history and makeup of the *flâneur* and of his gaze in more detail. It deconstructs the history of this scopic figure by examining that of a gazing figure which preceded him – the omniscient devil Asmodeus. It suggests that the *flâneur* has integrated some of the traits of his predecessor, which accounts in part for the ascendency of his gaze over the nineteenth-century city. It also argues that this figure has constructed itself over time in a palimpsestic manner and has thereby acquired a multi-layered personality – which might also explain the

[43] See Jeremy Tambling, *Going Astray: Dickens and London* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008).

persistence of this scopic figure throughout the centuries. In chapter 3, I explore the ways in which new nineteenth-century technologies picked up on the *flâneur*'s scopic dreams and created new modes of seeing which, in turn, informed the gaze of the *flâneur*. This chapter illustrates the form of reciprocity which existed between the constantly-evolving city space with its machines and shows and the shape-shifting walker and observer of its streets. Having dwelt on these different aspects of the *flâneur*'s gaze, the thesis proceeds to re-inscribe the *flâneur*'s eye within a walking body. One must not forget that the *flâneur*'s gaze was constructed through a living, moving body embedded in time and space. Chapter 4 thus insists on the *flâneur*'s corporeality and reminds us that *flânerie* begins within a phenomenological tradition. The final chapter is a detailed case study which returns to the idea of crossing by introducing the concept of *croisement*. The word *croisement* is a heuristic device which I develop to understand the role of the *flâneur* as *passeur* and go-between, and re-read the literary history of the De Quincey / Poe / Baudelaire triangle as one of constant crossings and crossovers. It concludes that the *flâneur*'s specific gaze, his permanent state of in-betweenness or 'out-of-jointness' stems from his crossing nature, and makes him 'contemporary'[44] – more capable than others of grasping his own time. He is both immersed in it and removed from it since he is always passing on and through, never remaining still in space or time.

Understanding the history and nature of the *flâneur* and of his gaze is essential to reopening the category and reinscribing him within a wider context. It allows us to think of him as not just a figure who is leading up to modernism, as we no longer live in a modernist world, but in terms which might be more relevant to us now. What the *flâneur* does – walking, watching, passing, and crossing – provides crucial and relevant tools that aid our understanding of a world which has long since moved beyond modernism.

[44] Giorgio Agamben, 'What is the contemporary?' in *Nudities*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp.10-19.

Chapter 1. Tackling Print Traffic: The *Flâneur* and his Origins

In order to be able to map out the evolution of the *flâneur*, one must retrace the steps of this emblematic nineteenth-century figure all the way back to its origins. Indeed, the *flâneur* was not always a Baudelairean icon of urban alienation. He actually originated in the mass-produced newspaper and commercial press of the nineteenth century on both sides of the Channel. In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Walter Benjamin suggests that the true substance of an epoch may be found in a body of texts of minor importance belonging to that period.

> It is one thing to incarnate a form; it is quite a different thing to give it its characteristic expression. Whereas the former is the business of the poet elect, the latter is often done incomparably more distinctly in the laborious efforts of minor writers. The life of the form is not identical with that of the works which are determined by it, indeed the clarity with which it is expressed can sometimes be in inverse proportion to the perfection of a literary work; and the form itself becomes evident precisely in the lean body of the inferior work, as its skeleton so to speak.[1]

For Benjamin, one should immerse oneself in the study of the minor texts which saturate an epoch to be able to apprehend that period correctly, which is precisely the method he adopted for his unfinished work, *The Arcades Project*. Balzac and Baudelaire gave us lasting incarnations of the Parisian *flâneur*, and yet, the 'inferior', mass-circulated discourse about the *flâneur* which was produced at the time can shed light on the way the city was being negotiated in both Paris and London. Drawing on Benjamin's methods, this chapter will trace the genesis of the *flâneur* by examining eighteenth-century texts showcasing precursors of the *flâneur* as well as early nineteenth-century texts showing how he first came to light. These texts form a general pattern or constellation of meaning, or a 'discourse' (in Foucault's sense), which is crucial to the understanding of this figure.

The meaning of the term *flâneur*, from the very start, evolved rapidly. The *flâneur* was a highly polymorphous and polysemous figure whose definition fluctuated constantly, even

[1] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* [1928], trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 2003), 58.

before the Baudelairean reshaping of its meaning. Keith Tester has summed up the difficulties every critic is confronted with when tackling the figure of the *flâneur*:

> There is a certain ambiguity concerning the historical specificity of the figure of the *flâneur*. On the one hand, there seems to be little doubt that the *flâneur* is specific to a Parisian time and place. On the other hand, the *flâneur* is used as a figure to illuminate issues of city life irrespective of time and place. […] The greyness of the historical specificity is perhaps as intrinsic to the debate as the problem acknowledged by Baudelaire of defining exactly what the '*flâneur*' means.[2]

The *flâneur* took on multiple roles from very early on. On the one hand, it is precisely this polymorphism, this elusive quality which makes it so hard to define and delineate. On the other hand, it is this pliability and adaptability which seduces writers and also gives the term this tendency to travel and export itself. Indeed, due to the print traffic between Paris and London, one finds occurrences of the *flâneur* – or similar figures – on either side of the Channel as early as the eighteenth century. This survey will follow a chronological outline in order to chart and understand the many transformations the *flâneur* underwent throughout the century. This chapter demonstrates how the figure's roots in print fostered a form of cross-cultural pollination which ensured the power and persistence of the figure.

I. The *flâneur*'s eighteenth-century precursors

To understand the progress and rise of this figure throughout the nineteenth century, one has to look back at the context in which he emerged as well as at his literary antecedents. Indeed, the word *flâneur* could only have been coined in a context where the trope of urban exploration was already well-established. Accordingly, I shall look at the context which preceded the emergence of the *flâneur*. Richard Steele and Joseph Addison's *Spectator* set an important precedent of urban spectatorship for the *flâneur*, but what is striking beyond its early publication date is its birthplace, which was not Paris but London. *The Spectator* was a daily publication founded by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele which ran between 1711 and 1712 and again in 1714. The articles were then collected in eight volumes which were widely

[2] Keith Tester (ed.), *The Flâneur* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 16.

read throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries not only in Britain but also in France. I shall also look at two French eighteenth-century writers who were influenced by *The Spectator* and who might be considered as *flâneurs avant la lettre*, Louis-Sébastien Mercier and Rétif de La Bretonne.

Before examining the content of *The Spectator*, I would like to dwell on the format of the publication, each issue of which consisted of one long essay, printed on a single sheet of paper. This short format was one which was eminently well-suited not only to the tastes of a widening reading public, but also to peripatetic urban observation, as Claire de Obaldia has pointed out:

> The essay is an essentially *ambulatory* and *fragmentary* prose form. Its direction and pace, the tracks it chooses to follow, can be changed at will; hence its *fragmentary* or 'paratactic' structure. Rather than progressing in a linear and planned fashion, the essay develops around a number of topics which offer themselves along the way. And this *sauntering* from one topic to the next together with the way in which each topic is informally 'tried out' suggests a tentativeness, a *looseness*, in short a *randomness* which seems to elude the unifying conception – syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic – of a recognizable generic identity. The very word 'essay' *disorientates* the reader's horizon of expectations, for if it is associated with the authority and authenticity of someone who speaks in his or her own name, it also disclaims all responsibility with regard to what is after all only 'tried out' and which is therefore closer, in a sense, to the 'as if' of fiction.[3] (My italics)

The traits which Claire de Obaldia associates with the essayistic form (which I have italicized) are characteristics which are at the core of flâneurial writing, or writing about the *flâneur*. Moreover, her description includes two ideas which are essential to the definition of *flânerie*: on the one hand, the essay is based on a recognizable, fixed form, which is how the *flâneur* starts off, both in terms of his generic appearance and function and of the type of publications he appears in. On the other hand, the essay contains the promise of a move towards fiction, a possibility for going astray, which *flânerie* also offers. The form of the essay thus seems to go hand in hand with the type of urban observer which Steele and

[3] Claire de Obaldia, *The Essayistic Spirit: Literature, Modern Criticism and the Essay* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 2-3.

Addison chose to introduce to the London public in their daily newspaper. *The Spectator*'s fictional narrator is Mr. Spectator, a character who circulates inconspicuously through the city and its society and thus fulfils his position as spectator. In the first issue of the publication, Mr. Spectator describes himself thus:

> I have passed my latter Years in this City, where I am frequently seen in most publick Places. […] There is no place of general Resort wherein I do not often make my appearance; sometimes I am seen thrusting my Head into a Round of Politicians at Will's and listning with great Attention to the Narratives that are made in those little Circular Audiences. […] In short, where-ever I see a Cluster of People, I always mix with them, tho' I never open my Lips but in my own Club. Thus I live in the World, rather as a Spectator of Mankind, than as one of the Species; by which means I have made myself a Speculative Statesman, Soldier, Merchant, and Artizan, without ever medling with any Practical Part in Life.[4]

The Spectator's urban nature, his public profile, and his tendency to adopt other personas are all traits which are inherent to the *flâneur*. The opening lines of the third issue confirm this similarity between the two characters: 'In one of my late Rambles, or rather Speculations, I looked into the great Hall where the Bank is kept.'[5] This short sentence condenses three terms which are essential to the definition of *flânerie*, and which we shall come back to: walking,[6] looking, and speculating. The verb to speculate encapsulates the characteristics of the early *flâneur* particularly well since it evokes the idea of 'observing or viewing mentally,' and carries overtones of its older meaning, 'to look at, to inspect closely,' but also refers to 'the buying and selling of commodities or effects in order to profit by a rise or fall in their market value.'[7] As we shall see, there was a certain amount of unease around this speculating figure with time, money and leisure on his hands when he first appeared in Paris at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Similar misgivings seem to surround the figure of Mr. Spectator a

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[4] Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, No. 1, Thursday, March 1, 1711 in Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, *The Spectator* [1711-1714], ed. Henry Morley, 3 vols (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1891).
[5] Addison, *The Spectator*, No. 1, Thursday, March 1, 1711.
[6] Although here the word 'ramble' might also refer to the fact that Mr. Spectator might be travelling by carriage.
[7] 'speculate, *v*. 1. To observe or view mentally; to consider, examine, or reflect upon with close attention; to contemplate; to theorize upon. 2. To look or gaze at (something); to examine, inspect, or observe closely or narrowly, Obs. 5.To engage in the buying and selling of commodities or effects in order to profit by a rise or fall in their market value; to undertake, to take part or invest in, a business enterprise or transaction of a risky nature in the expectation of considerable gain.' *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011). <http://www.oed.com/>

century earlier in London since the latter takes care to clear his name from any suspicion of idleness which might fall upon him: 'The present writing is only to admonish the World, that they shall not find me an idle but a very busy Spectator.'[8] As can be seen from these examples, there are uncanny similarities between Mr. Spectator's self-portrait and early Parisian descriptions of the *flâneur*, yet *The Spectator* appeared in London about a century before the French word was coined around 1806. Interestingly, in one of the first issues of the publication, Mr. Spectator makes the following assertion: 'There are, I must confess, many to whom my Person is as well-known as that of their nearest Relations, who give themselves no further Trouble about calling me by my Name or Quality, but speak of me very currently by Mr what-d-ye-call-him.'[9] This name points up the lack of a word for this new urban observer in early eighteenth-century London. The word *flâneur* would only appear a century later not in London but in Paris. For Jonathan Conlin, the earlier appearance of urban walkers in London is due to earlier urban improvements:

> That this type of urban walking appeared so much earlier in London reflected the improvements in urban design – pavements, gutters, street lamps – adopted after the Great Fire of 1666, particularly in the fashionable squares of the city's western fringes. These made it possible for this peripatetic philosopher to wander the streets without getting doused with mud, assaulted by thieves or run over by a carriage. Such improvements came to Paris achingly slowly, much to the frustration of would-be French Mr. Spectators like Mercier. […] In his *Parallèle*, Mercier demanded that London-style sidewalks (*trottoirs*) be introduced to Paris. Otherwise, he noted, London, where the Pedestrian came first, would always shame Paris.[10]

In France, Louis-Sébastien Mercier is considered by many to be one of the most important forefathers of the *flâneur* of the 1830s and 1840s.[11] Mercier published hundreds of sketches of his contemporaries in his incredibly popular *Tableau de Paris* between 1781 and 1788. The idea for the *Tableau de Paris* might have stemmed from his interest in English

[8] Steele, *The Spectator*, No. 5, Monday, March 5, 1711.
[9] Steele, *The Spectator*, No. 5, Monday, March 5, 1711.
[10] Jonathan Conlin, *Tales of Two Cities: Paris, London and the Birth of the Modern City* (London: Atlantic books, 2013), google ebook, no page number.
[11] See Karlheinz Stierle, *La Capitale des signes. Paris et son discours*, trad. Marianne Rocher-Jacquin, (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2001), and Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth-Century City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

culture, and he may have found inspiration for his writing in *The Spectator*. Indeed, Mercier travelled to London and compared the French and the English capital in a piece entitled *Parallèle de Paris et de Londres* before he published his *Tableau de Paris*. For him, the two cities were so alike that to compare them was unavoidable: 'Londres, voisine et rivale, est inévitable à considérer en parlant de Paris; et le parallèle vient s'offrir de lui-même. Elles sont si proches et si différentes, quoique se ressemblant à bien des égards, que pour achever le portrait de l'une, il n'est pas je pense hors de place, d'arrêter un peu les yeux sur quelques traits de l'autre.'[12] A typical example of eighteenth-century Anglomania, Mercier was writing in the wake of Voltaire's *Lettres anglaises*,[13] but the comparative framework he established in this work sharpened his eye for detail and was already a blueprint for his new way to explore and write about the city – he started writing his *Tableau de Paris* a year later. He stressed the relevance of the London comparison again in volume XI of his *Tableau de Paris*, as if London offered a counterpoint with which he opened and closed his *Tableau*.[14]

Mercier famously claimed that he could be said to have 'painted' his pictures of city life with his legs: 'J'ai tant couru pour faire le Tableau de Paris que je puis dire l'avoir fait avec mes jambes.'[15] As we shall see, nineteenth-century *flâneurs* often placed their work under the auspices of Mercier. Several features which would come to define the *flâneur* stand out in Mercier's preface. In the *Tableaux*, he first insists on the importance of observing and knowing present-day Paris and Parisians instead of focusing on the past:

> Beaucoup de ses habitans sont comme étrangers dans leur propre ville […] ils n'appercevoient pour ainsi dire plus; car les objets que nous voyons tous les jours, ne sont pas ceux que nous connoissons le mieux. […] Ce qui m'environne a des droits particuliers à mon attention. Je dois vivre au milieu de mes semblables, plutôt que de me promener dans Sparte, dans Rome et dans Athènes. […] Mon

[12] Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Parallèle de Paris et de Londres* [c.1780], (Paris: Didier érudition, 1982), 53. 'When one considers Paris, one cannot avoid looking at London, its neighbor and rival; the parallel suggests itself. The two capitals are so similar and so different, and yet resemble each other in so many ways that to paint the portrait of one, I think it would not be out of place to look at some of the other's traits.'
[13] Voltaire, *Lettres écrites de Londres sur les Anglois et autres sujets* (Basle: Bowyer, 1734).
[14] Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris* [1781-1788], 2 vols (Paris: INALF, 1961), vol. 2 [1788], XI, 371. 'Les deux capitales sont si proches & si différentes, quoique se ressemblant à bien des égards, que, pour achever mon ouvrage, il est nécessaire que l'arrête mon regard sur l'*Émule* de Paris.' 'The two capitals are so similar and so different, yet resemble each other in so many ways that to finish my work, I must contemplate Paris's rival city.'
[15] Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, vol. 1, 117.

> contemporain, mon compatriote, voilà l'individu que je dois spécialement connoître.[16]

According to him, there is a correct way of seeing things, which demands that one cast a new gaze on the objects and people that surround one and lift the veil draped around them by habit in order to discover them anew. Secondly, he uses the metaphor of the painter to describe himself and his work: 'Je dois avertir que je n'ai tenu dans cet ouvrage que le pinceau du *peintre*, et que je n'ai presque rien donné à la réflexion du *philosophe*.'[17] He thus dismisses the mediation of the philosopher to adopt the vision of the painter. 'J'ai crayonné d' après mes vues; j'ai varié mon *tableau* autant qu'il m'a été possible; je l'ai peint sous plusieurs faces; et le voici, tracé tel qu'il est sorti de dessous ma plume, à mesure que mes yeux et mon entendement en ont rassemblé les parties.'[18] He attests that his paintbrush or pen restored faithfully what he had observed. This association between the *flâneur* and art, which will endure throughout the century, is of paramount importance here, because much of the discourse on the *flâneur* revolves around the issue of representation. This discourse highlights a tension inherent in the figure: the insistence on the faithful account which provides a direct and unmediated access to the city is belied by the very existence of the *flâneur* who embodies this mediation. Despite Mercier's assertion, his text does not enable us to look at the city directly, we see the city through the gaze of a *flâneur*, or rather, we look at a *flâneur* who is observing the city through the eyes of a writer. This example proves that the questions of the gaze, hermeneutics and the showcasing of the hermeneutic process, are already at the heart of *flânerie*.

Finally, Mercier underlines his own control over the city, and his capacity to produce a unified vision of the city, as Priscilla Ferguson noted:

> The epigraph to the fifth volume boldly states his credo: 'Variety, my subject belongs to you.' There is something extraordinary about this statement: instead of

[16] Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, vol. 1, v, xi. 'Many of its [Paris'] inhabitants are like foreigners in their own city […]. As it were, they cannot see anymore, for the things we see every day are not those we know best. […] What surrounds me deserves my particular attention. I must live amongst my fellow creatures, rather than stroll through Sparta, Rome or Athens. […] My contemporary, my fellow countryman, that is the individual I must know expressly.'

[17] Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, vol. 1, x. 'I must inform you that in this work, I have only held the brush of the *painter*, and have hardly given any consideration to the reflexions of the *philosopher*.'

[18] Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, vol. 1, vi. 'I sketched what I saw; I brought as much variety to my painting as I could; I painted it from several angles; and here it is, drawn as it emerged from my pen, as my eyes and understanding gradually assembled its parts.'

> claiming a hierarchical focus as an ordering control – king, country, or other symbols of authority – Mercier takes on the whole range of the city around him and makes himself the control. […] 'This is what we now are,' Mercier seems to say, inviting everyone to take both comfort and pride in the cohesion and identity that reading *his* experiences can bring.[19]

One might indeed say that Mercier's writing of the city is demystifying and reassuring, since by reading his sketches, Parisians can in a way observe and begin to apprehend the mysterious city. This reassuring quality is a trait which Benjamin's analysis of the *flâneur*/physiologist will emphasize, and which might also be applied to the accounts of another famous eighteenth-century urban wanderer, Rétif de la Bretonne.

The success of Rétif de la Bretonne's eight-volume work, *Les Nuits de Paris ou le Spectateur nocturne*, (1788-1794), which he started to publish just as Mercier issued his last volume, confirmed the keen interest of the public for urban exploration. Rétif de la Bretonne's text emphasizes aspects which are similar to Mercier's: he also sees himself as a faithful painter of reality: 'Peindre, […] au-naturel, les états inférieurs: Ils sont peu connus; je passe ma vie à les observer; je serai leur peintre; Mais point de chimères! Il ne faut pas que je succombe à la tentation de les déguiser, comme on fait au Théâtre-italien!'[20] What really distinguishes Rétif from Mercier is his focus on night-time Paris, which he draws attention to by calling himself the 'nocturnal spectator' in the subtitle of *Les Nuits de Paris* ('Le Spectateur nocturne'), or the Parisian 'Night Owl' ('Le Hibou Spectateur'[21]): ''Citoyens paisibles! J'ai veillé pour vous; j'ai couru feus les nuits pour vous!'[22] Alexandre Dumas remarked that the two men, who were friends, had somehow shared out Parisian time between themselves: 'les deux amis s'étaient partagé le cadran: l'un avait pris le jour, et c'était Mercier; l'autre avait pris la nuit, et c'était Restif de La Bretonne.'[23]

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[19] Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution*, 48-9.

[20] Nicolas-Edme Rétif de la Bretonne, *Les Nuits de Paris ou le Spectateur nocturne*, 8 vols (Londres: [s.n.], 1788-1794), vol. 7, 948. 'I must paint inferior classes au naturel: they are little-known; I spend my life observing them; I shall paint their portrait, but there shall be no lies! I must not give in to temptation and dress them up, as is the fashion in Italian theatres.'

[21] Rétif de la Bretonne, *Les Nuits de Paris*, vol. 1, 1.

[22] Rétif de la Bretonne, *Les Nuits de Paris*, vol. 1, 3-4. 'Peaceful fellow citizens! I have stayed up for you! I have roamed the nights which have gone by for you.'

[23] Alexandre Dumas, *Ingénue*, quoted in Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution*, endnote p.50. 'The two friends had shared clock time between themselves: one had picked daytime, it was Mercier; the other had picked night-time, it was Rétif de la Bretonne.'

Thus, with Steele's and Addison's 'Mr. Spectator' in London, and Mercier and Rétif de la Bretonne in Paris, a new type of literature emerged in the eighteenth century, in which the author's intention was to encompass the variety and 'fugitives nuances'[24] one might come across in all walks of urban life.

II. The first *flâneur*: 'a man of insufferable idleness'?

The figures we have just described were isolated characters referring either to literary persona or writers who were deemed eccentric by their contemporaries. However, at the turn of the century, a new type of walker appeared on the streets of Paris, and his presence became so pervasive that a word had to be coined to designate him. The word *flâneur* did not immediately come to designate the literary urban explorer keen to share his knowledge of the city, but rather, it evoked an idle character to be found loafing on the streets of Paris.

The etymology of this word remains unknown, although the *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle* suggests that the term may derive from the Irish word *flanni*, meaning 'libertine.'[25] The article also explicitly associates *flânerie* to Paris, or rather, to the metropolis, for a *flâneur* would not be able to flourish in a provincial town, the field of observation being too limited: 'Ce n'est guère qu'à Paris qu'on trouve de vrais flâneurs, il n'y a que cette grande cité pour offrir aux oisifs, aux badauds, une série de distractions variées et qui ne coûtent rien.'[26] According to a 1808 definition, the *flâneur* was first and foremost a man of insufferable idleness: '*Un grand flâneur* – Pour dire un grand paresseux; fainéant, homme d'une oisiveté insupportable, qui ne sait où promener son importunité et son ennui.'[27] As is obvious from this definition, its usage was a largely pejorative one. The idea that the

[24] Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, vol. 1, v.
[25] 'FLÂNER: L'origine de ce mot est inconnue; on a proposé l'irlandais *flanni*, libertin.' Pierre Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle: français, historique, géographique, mythologique, bibliographique, littéraire, artistique, scientifique, etc.*, 17 vols (Paris: Administration du grand Dictionnaire universel, 1866-1877), vol. 8 F-G, 436.
[26] Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*, 436. 'One would hardly find true *flâneurs* outside Paris, for only such a great city can offer idlers and curious onlookers a series of varied distractions which do not cost anything.'
[27] D'Hautel, *Dictionnaire du bas-langage, ou des manières de parler usitées parmi le peuple* (Paris: imprimerie de L. Haussmann, 1808). 'A lazybones, a loafer, a man of insufferable idleness, who doesn't know where to take his troublesomeness and his boredom.'

idleness of the *flâneur* is to be frowned upon has mostly disappeared from contemporary accounts of *flânerie*, yet it persisted throughout the century, as the *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*, published between 1866 and 1877, attests:

> Le flâneur est une variété du paresseux; à ce titre, les lecteurs du Grand Dictionnaire n'ont pas besoin que nous leur exposions la répugnance que nous inspire ce type inutile qui encombre les rues des grandes villes et y gène la circulation.[28]

However, one must lay emphasis on the rapidity with which the meaning of the word evolved, which shows that from the start, the *flâneur* was a protean figure. The same Larousse article continues thus: 'Toutefois, il y a dans la paresse du flâneur un côté original, artistique.'[29] The article then makes a point of distinguishing between the unthinking idler and the intelligent *flâneur*.

One of the *flâneur*'s earliest appearances (if not his earliest one), is in a short 1806 anonymous pamphlet entitled *Le Flâneur au salon ou M. Bon-Homme: examen joyeux des tableaux, mêlé de vaudevilles*.[30] Being a person of independant means ('rentier') with no familial ties, he may freely dispose of his time to stroll around the city and note down the impressions collected on his walks: 'Il avait pris dès le matin la résolution de faire un petit journal de ce qu'il verrait ou entendrait de plus curieux pendant la durée de sa carrière flânante, pour remplir le vide de ses heures d'insomnie.'[31] Mr. Bonhomme is interested in art – his eager anticipation of the salon exhibitions of painting is mentioned several times, and he may be found gazing at caricatures in front of a print-seller's shop-window, or sitting in the Lecuy café to eavesdrop on the discussions of painters from the academy.[32] He spends a considerable amount of time in cafés and restaurants, and whiles away the rest of his day

[28] Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*, 436. 'The *flâneur* is a species which belongs to the family of lazybones; as such, the readers of the Great Dictionary do not need to be reminded of the abhorrence which this useless sort which crowds the streets and obstructs traffic arouses in us.'

[29] Larousse, *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle*, 436. 'However, there is something original and artistic in the *flâneur*'s idleness.'

[30] Anon, *Le flâneur au salon ou Mr Bon-homme; examen joyeux des tableaux mêlé de vaudevilles* (Paris: Aubry, 1806).

[31] *Le flâneur au salon ou Mr Bon-homme*, 11. 'That very morning, he had resolved to write a diary detailing the most curious things he would see or hear during his flâneuring career, to fill the emptiness of his sleepless hours.'

[32] Le flâneur au salon ou Mr Bon-homme, 4, 11. 'On est presque assuré de le rencontrer tous les jours […] devant la boutique de Martinet, marchand d'estampes, où il regarde toutes les caricatures. […] Ce café est la réunion des peintres anciens et modernes de l'académie, et de leurs élèves. Là il est souvent témoin de discussion sur la peinture, sur le mérite des peintres et sur les critiques qu'on essuyé les meilleurs ouvrages.'

strolling around the streets of the capital. He delights at the sight of a 'toothpick and garter street-vendor,' a gentleman, a salesclerk,[33] stops at the park in front of a dance band to watch the townspeople, soldiers, *bourgeois* and young seamstresses whirl past him,[34] watches people playing games, and on his way to the theatre, stops at a bookshop to leaf through a novel.[35]

These elements indicate that the *flâneur* is produced by a new urban environment. Outwardly, Mr. Bonhomme displays the characteristics of the 1830-40s *flâneur* as analysed by Benjamin – he is a solitary onlooker, a gentleman who has the luxury of time and stands outside production, yet he already writes and is associated with art. However, this benign 1806 *flâneur* is quite far-removed from the Benjaminian emblem of alienation, and his relationship to the capital has none of the complex intensity which will characterize Baudelaire's writing of Paris. Although Monsieur Bonhomme defines himself as an aesthete, he is certainly no artist himself. He is introduced to us as 'a man whom his neighbours call Monsieur BONHOMME, but who, throughout Paris, is more commonly known as the *Flâneur*' ('un individu, que ses voisins appellent Monsieur BONHOMME; mais, qui, dans tout Paris, est plus connu sous le nom *du Flâneur*'[36]). The word 'bonhomme' here already gives us a clue as to the character of this *flâneur*. The word bonhomme can simply designate an 'agreeable man', but it can also refer to a 'simple, naïve, excessively credulous or uncritical man.'[37] He is also associated with the 'musard' ('On prétend que c'est un cousin-très-germain de M.Muzard'),[38] referring to a person who spends their time 'idling, being diverted by trifles.'[39] His regular routine seems to suggest that he is a creature of habit: 'On est presque assuré de le rencontrer tous les jours, aux endroits ci-dessous indiqués.'[40] This pamphlet, with its gently mocking tone, depicts the *flâneur* as a rather tame, dull creature who is quite far removed from the Benjaminian *flâneur*. Other humorous works about the *flâneur*

[33] *Le flâneur au salon ou Mr Bon-homme*, 13-14.
[34] *Le flâneur au salon ou Mr Bon-homme*, 14. 'Il a cependant fait quelques pauses devant les jardins élégans et les bastringues joyeux, où le peuple, le militaire, le bourgeois et les grisettes vont danser.'
[35] *Le flâneur au salon ou Mr Bon-homme*, 14.
[36] *Le flâneur au salon ou Mr Bon-homme*, 4.
[37] 'Bonhomme, *subst.*: 1. Homme bon, vertueux, d'un comportement favorable, agréable à autrui. 2. Homme simple, naïf, excessivement crédule ou complaisant. *Trésor de la Langue Française informatisé* (TLFi) (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2004). <http://atilf.atilf.fr/tlf.htm> [accessed 10/02/2010]
[38] *Le flâneur au salon ou Mr Bon-homme*, 4. 'He is said to be a close first cousin of Mr Idler.'
[39] 'musard, *subst.*: Personne qui passe son temps à flâner, à s'amuser à des riens.' TLFi.
[40] *Le flâneur au salon ou Mr Bon-homme*, 4. 'You can be almost certainly that you will find him every day in the places listed below.'

were published in the early nineteenth century.[41] Jean-Baptiste Auguste d'Aldéguier was one of the *flâneur*'s most virulent detractors: 'Les Boulevards sont les galeries des *flâneurs*, c'est là qu'on les voit par milliers promener leur inutilité. 'Voir et être vu, est le secret de tout mouvement qu'on aperçoit sur le boulevard. Ce désir naît de l'ennui. […] le flâneur n'observe rien, ne retient rien.'[42] The dynamics of 'seeing and being seen' mentioned here are crucial to the definition of the *flâneur*, and we shall come back to this aspect in more detail later on. But one might already note that an interesting feature of Mr. Bonhomme's depiction is that he is being observed by the narrator, as well as by his neighbours and by the Paris population that he observes himself. These multiple gazes draw attention to the tensions that underlie the construction of the *flâneur* in the early century.

What is interesting about the emergence of this new figure is that this early *flâneur* is poised between the *Ancien Régime* and the new century: Mr. Bonhomme is a man with time and leisure, and this leisure is enjoyed, performed and laid out. This unselfconscious *flâneur* is seen occupying various urban spaces with great insouciance. Yet, the narrator's voice constantly derides the idleness of this new urban figure, which intimates his disapprobation of or at least his discomfort at the proliferation of this new type. *Le Flâneur au salon ou M. Bon-Homme* appears as the idea of *flânerie* is still in its infancy. Mr. Bonhomme observes the changing urban panorama around him, but does not comprehend or appropriate it. He is strangely detached from it. This simple *flâneur*, whose behaviour is lightly yet constantly disparaged by the author, takes a childlike pleasure in observing the city, but does not endow it with meaning. This simple *flâneur* is regularly disparaged in Parisian publications during the first half of the century, notably in Etienne de Jouy, 'La journée d'un flâneur,' in *Nouveaux tableaux de Paris*.[43] This caricatural idle *flâneur* crosses the Channel since we also find him depicted in London publications. Margaret Rose has studied in detail the connections between Louis Huart's 1841 *Physiologie du flâneur*[44] and Albert Smith's 'Physiology of the

[41] See 'Le flâneur parisien', *Figaro*, 13 Novembre, 1831, 2, and 'Le flâneur de province', *Figaro*, 14 Novembre, 1831, 1-2.
[42] J.B. Auguste d'Aldéguier, *Le Flâneur, galerie pittoresque, philosophique et morale de tout ce que Paris offre de curieux et de remarquable... Par un habitué du boulevard de Gand* (Paris: chez tous les marchands de nouveautés, 1826), 186. 'The *Boulevards* are the galleries of the *flâneurs*. It is the place thousands of them have chosen to parade their uselessness. To see and to be seen is the secret behind any movement that can be detected on the boulevard. This desire stems from boredom. […] The *flâneur* does not observe anything, or remember anything.'
[43] Etienne de Jouy, 'La journée d'un flâneur', in *Nouveaux tableaux de Paris, ou, observations sur les mœurs et usages des parisiens au commencement du XIXe siècle*, 2 vols (Paris: Ainé, 1828), vol. 2, 274-291.
[44] Louis Huart, *Physiologie du flâneur* (Paris: Aubert et Cie, 1841).

London Idler' and subsequent 1848 publication, *The Natural History of the Idler upon Town*. She explains that 'Smith was one of the earliest contributors to *Punch* and anonymously published several humorous 'physiologies' in its early volumes, in imitation (and sometimes also ironic parody) of the comic French physiologies of the early 1840s.'[45] Michael Hollington points out that the English author Albert Smith was 'a close associate of Dickens himself – […] and often accompanied him on flâneurial excursions in London.'[46] One might then wonder if this early, caricatural *flâneur* did not influence the depiction of the most famous of Dickens's idle characters, Mr. Skimpole:

> He must confess to two of the oldest infirmities in the world: one was, that he had no idea of time; the other, that he had no idea of money. In consequence of which, he never kept an appointment, never could transact any business, and never knew the value of anything! Well! So he had got on in life, and here he was! He was very fond of reading the papers, very fond of making fancy-sketches with a pencil, very fond of nature, very fond of art. All he asked of society was to let him live. That wasn't much. His wants were few. Give him the papers, conversation, music, mutton, coffee, landscape, fruit in the season, a few sheets of Bristol-board, and a little claret, and he asked no more. He was a mere child in the world, but he didn't cry for the moon. He said to the world, "Go your several ways in peace! Wear red coats, blue coats, lawn-sleeves, put pens behind your ears, wear aprons, go after glory, holiness, commerce, trade, any object you prefer; only — let Harold Skimpole live!"[47]

Like Monsieur Bonhomme, Mr. Skimpole is a caricature. He insists on his fondness for art and delights in the innocent pleasures around him. Most of all, he displays his utter disinterestedness in the drudgery of adult work and his abhorrence of money-matters, while paradoxically living off the hard labour of others. What characterizes Mr. Skimpole is that he does not speculate (in the sense of buying and selling), and he is quite incapable of attaining financial independence. In a way, he is a caricature of the early *flâneur* pushed to the extreme. Dickens heavily satirizes the fact that he lives at the expense of others, whereas descriptions of the early *flâneur* merely hint at the problem. The early *flâneur* was thus the symbol of a

[45] Margaret A. Rose (ed.), *Flâneurs & Idlers: Louis Huart, 'Physiologie du flâneur' (1841); Albert Smith, 'The Natural History of the Idler upon Town' (1848)* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2007), 27.
[46] Michael Hollington, '"Petrified unrest": Dickens and Baudelaire on London and Paris 1855-56', *Synergies, Royaume-Uni et Irlande*, n°3 (2010), 84.
[47] Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* [1853] (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), chapter 6, 90.

new urban 'type,' the *rentier*, who embodied the rejection of the bourgeois ideal of hard work and industry, which meant he was systematically derided and caricatured.

The meanings associated with the *flâneur* evolved and changed throughout the century, but these examples show that the negative connotations of idleness associated with the figure endured and periodically resurfaced on both side of the Channel throughout the century.

III. A marginal observer

This section will dwell on two urban observers – one from Paris, one from London – who could be seen as transitional figures between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Etienne de Jouy's *L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin* and Charles Lamb's *Elia* were two hugely popular essayistic *personas* whose purpose was to observe the changing city around them. Although not known as *flâneurs*, they appeared simultaneously with the *flâneur* and constitute interesting examples of urban observers who were the product of the cultural cross-pollination which was taking place between Paris and London at the beginning of the century.

1. A Parisian case study: from the hermit to the *flâneur*

Publications concerned with the observation of Paris followed closely during the early nineteenth century. After the upheaval of the French revolution, these accounts attempted to come to terms with the new city by conflating the eighteenth-century tradition of urban peripatetic essay-writing with the nascent figure of the *flâneur*. On the one hand, there was a solid tradition of urban observation whose concise format, the essay, was well-adapted to city-walkers who wanted to depict the new city and to urban dwellers who wanted to read about it. On the other hand, at the same time, a new figure with time and leisure on his hands started roaming the streets of the capital and appearing in the pages of newspapers. Within a few years, the *flâneur* came to be known as the seasoned observer of the streets who was in an ideal position to write these essays. This section will examine how the figure of the *flâneur* and that of the urban writer became amalgamated within a short period of time.

In the preface to his 1809 *Paris dans le dix-neuvième siècle ou Réflexions d'un observateur*, which is a work of urban observation typical of that period, Pierre Jouhard does not yet use the term *flâneur*, but places his work under the aegis of Mercier:

> Dans un ouvrage plein de verve et d'originalité, un auteur spirituel, en traçant le tableau de mœurs de Paris, a peint celles du siècle qui vient de s'écouler. C'était du fouet vengeur de la satire que tout bon Français devait alors armer ses mains: ce fut une indignation vertueuse qui dicta les pages les plus éloquentes du *Tableau de Paris*. Combien est différente la position où se trouve aujourd'hui l'historien! […] C'est de ce peuple régénéré […] que je vais essayer de crayonner les mœurs, les usages.[48]

Jouhard underlines the drastically different political situation he finds himself in. The French Revolution has happened, which justifies the necessity for his new attempt at sketching Paris and its population.

However, the figure who really brings the eighteenth-century tradition of peripatetic observation into the nineteenth century in Paris is Etienne de Jouy's 'hermit.' Jouy's 1812 serial, *L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin, ou observations sur les mœurs et les usages français au commencement du XIXe siècle* was originally published in 1811 in *La Gazette de France* and subsequently compiled in a five-volume collection between 1812 and 1814. The series's astounding popularity hints at the public's desire to understand a city that was changing before their very eyes. Jouy's original preface stages a conversation between the hermit and a bookseller who wishes to publish a collection of his chronicles. The hermit's initial reaction is to state that his chronicles are as flippant as they are short-lived, and therefore not worth publishing. Paradoxically, collected series of essays about the city are part of a tradition, as the bookseller points out:

> LE LIBRAIRE: Ne cite-t-on pas plusieurs collections du même genre, échappées à la rigueur de cet arrêt? *Le Pour et le Contre*, *le Spectateur*, *le Tuteur*, *le*

[48] Pierre Jouhard, *Paris dans le dix-neuvième siècle ou Réflexions d'un observateur* (Paris: J.G. Dentu, 1809), discours préliminaire, vii, xii. 'In a work brimming with spirit and originality, an ingenious author, by sketching a picture of the mores of Paris, has painted the customs of the century which has just drawn to a close. Any self-respecting Frenchman, in that period, had to wield the vindictive sword of satire – a righteous indignation guided the hand which wrote the most eloquent pages of the *Tableau de Paris*. How different is the Historian's situation now! […]My task will be to attempt to sketch the practices and customs of this regenerated population.'

Babillard, le Fainéant, etc.? L'HERMITE: Sans doute; mais on sait aussi que ces ouvrages avaient pour auteurs L'abbé Prévost, Addison, Steele, Johnson.[49]

It is interesting to note that most of the publications mentioned here were either London-inspired or London publications: he mentions L'abbé Prévost's *Le Pour et le Contre*, which was published in London, Richard Steele and Joseph Addison's *The Spectator*, and Samuel Johnson's *The Idler*. *Le Babillard* was a French periodical edited by James Rutlidge and modeled on Richard Steele's *The Tatler* (*Le Babillard* is French for a 'tatler', or talkative person).[50] Indeed, the hermit explicitly decides to place his own chronicles under the patronage of Steele and Addison: 'Addison a peint les mœurs et les usages de Londres, au commencement du dix- huitième siècle; j'essaie de donner une idée de celles de Paris, au commencement du dix -neuvième, voilà d'abord un point de ressemblance.'[51] This insistence on the importance of the filiation with the London journalistic and peripatetic heritage in Jouy's text is striking. His ambition is to write the French *Spectator*. Thus, both Jouhard and Jouy are steeped in the eighteenth-century tradition of urban peripatetic writing, with a definite emphasis on the English practices of urban spectatorship. Etienne de Jouy's example is proof that the exchanges between both capitals were rapid and abundant. The success of Jouy's hermit was such that it was translated for the English public as early as 1815,[52] and spawned numerous imitations. In 1819, Felix MacDonough published *The Hermit in London; or, Sketches of English Manners*,[53] which in turn was translated into French in 1820: *L'Hermite de Londres, ou Observations sur les mœurs et usages des Anglais au commencement du XIXe siècle, faisant suite à la Collection des mœurs françaises par M. de Jouy*.[54] One might note from the title that editors clearly attempted to pass this translation off

[49] Étienne de Jouy, *L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin, ou observations sur les mœurs et les usages français au commencement du XIXe siècle* [1812-1814], 5 vols (Paris: Pillet, 1813), vol. 1, ix. 'Are there not several collections of the same kind, which escaped the fate the rigorous judgment you imparted? *Le Pour et le Contre*, *The Spectator*, *Le Tuteur*, *Le Babillard*, *The Idler*, etc.? The hermit: 'That is undoubtedly the case, but one also knows that these works have been written by L'abbé Prévost, Addison, Steele, Johnson.'

[50] Jonathan Conlin has explored how French publications were modeled on English ones in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. See his introduction entitled 'Rough Crossings' in *Tale of Two Cities*.

[51] Jouy, *L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin*, vol. 1, ix-x. 'Addison painted the customs and practices of London at the beginning of the eighteenth century; I am trying to sketch a likeness of the Paris ones at the beginning of the nineteenth century – there is one first similarity.'

[52] Etienne de Jouy, *The Paris Spectator; or, l'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin. Containing observations upon Parisian manners*, trans. W. Jerdan, 3 vols (London: printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1815).

[53] Felix MacDonough, *The Hermit in London; or, Sketches of English Manners*, 5 vols (London: printed for Henry Colburn, 1819, 1820).

[54] Felix Mac Donogh, *L'Hermite de Londres, ou Observations sur les mœurs et usages des Anglais au commencement du XIXe siècle, faisant suite à la Collection des mœurs françaises par M. de Jouy*, 3 vols (Paris: Pillet aîné, 1820-1821).

as one of Etienne de Jouy's own productions. The story of the translation of that book itself is interesting, since it was originally translated from the English by A-J.-B. de Defauconpret, who pretended to be the author of this book, depending on the credulity of the French reading public, who relied on translators for their knowledge of British literary productions.[55] The case of the hermit thus exemplifies an interesting amalgamation between the French and British peripatetic heritage and points to the significance of exchanges between Paris and London at the beginning of the century.

What is interesting about Jouy's writing is that he follows in the footsteps of Mercier but also departs from his heritage. The 1789 Revolution has left its mark on the city, and one must lay emphasis on the fact that the urban context has been transformed, and is still in the process of changing. Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson sees Revolution as 'the distinctive chronotope of nineteenth-century urban narratives,'[56] and according to her, the rise of the literary guidebooks of Paris and later of the physiologies is intricately linked with the idea of revolution, and reveals the combination of anxiety and curiosity about the new city which pervaded the century. She notes a dramatic difference between the writing of Mercier and that of the hermit: 'Cohesion has been shattered in the twenty-five years between Jouy and Mercier. Unlike Mercier, the hermit remains aloof from the scenes he observes.'[57] The word 'aloof' here is important, and Jouy's choice of a hermit as his main character is significant. The hermit bears a striking similarity with the Benjaminian *flâneur*, especially in his solitude. In the preface, the hermit expresses his surprise at 'being found out' by the bookseller, as he is trying to keep both his identity and his 'hiding place' secret, which reveals the efforts the hermit puts in trying to keep himself separate from the world: 'L'HERMITE: Qui vous a dit, Monsieur , que ce fut moi? Comment savez-vous? .... LE LIBRAIRE: Je ne suppose pas que

[55] Joseph Marie Quérard, *La France littéraire ou Dictionnaire bibliographique des savants, historiens et gens de lettres de la France, ainsi que des littérateurs étrangers qui ont écrit en français, plus particulièrement pendant les XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, 10 vols (Paris: Firmin Didot père et fils (Paris), [puis] Firmin Didot frères, 1827-1839), vol. 2, 419. Quoted in Patrick Hersant, 'Defauconpret, ou le demi-siècle d'Auguste', *Romantisme* 'Traduire au xixe siècle' n° 106, (1999), 83-88, (p. 85). 'C'est d'après M. Defauconpret lui-même […] que nous citons ces trois *hermites*, comme production originales: pourtant nous avons lieu de douter qu'ils soient dans cette catégorie. Comme les Français ne connaissent guère de la littérature anglaise que ce que les traducteurs veulent bien leur faire connaître, il est bien facile d'abuser de leur crédulité, en leur présentant des traductions comme des ouvrages originaux, et vice versa.'

[56] Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution*, 5.

[57] Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution*, 56.

vous ayez cru pouvoir rester longtems caché sous votre nom pseudonyme.'[58] Unlike the author of *Le Flâneur au salon ou M. Bon-Homme*, Jouy's hermit does not use the word *flâneur*, yet he describes himself as one in a facetious self-deprecating manner: 'il me reste à vous apprendre ce que je fais: rien, absolument rien; je vais, je viens, je regarde, j'écoute, et je tiens note le soir, en rentrant, de tout ce que j'ai vu et entendu dans ma journée.'[59] The very writing of his popular chronicles contradicts this ironic statement, which astutely makes readers endorse his 'non-activity.'

Jouy's hermit thus already starts subverting the pejorative image of *flânerie* by issuing his witty observations about the Parisian scene. The following statement encapsulates the tensions inherent to this figure and seems to herald and even mirror Benjamin's definition of the *flâneur*: 'Je le dis à ma louange ou à ma honte, comme on voudra, mais j'aime à sortir de ma cellule, à rôder au hasard, à me promener sans but; je vois, j'écoute, j'examine; je tue le tems, qui me le rendra bien; et j'observe les autres […] Les endroits où se porte la foule sont ceux que je préfère.'[60] The hermit's *flânerie* here is described both as shameful and praiseworthy, passive yet strangely active. The hermit series' popularity was such that other writers soon started replicating this successful formula, as Michel-Nicolas Balisson de Rougemont did in *Le Rôdeur français, ou Les moeurs du jour*, whose six volumes were published between 1816 and 1827. I would like to point out two features of this series. First of all, Balisson de Rougemont acknowledges Etienne de Jouy as his master and precursor: 'Le Rôdeur français ne paraît dans le monde qu'à la suite de l'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin, et nous nous éloignons des tems où l'on faisait fortune aux dépens de son maître.'[61] Secondly, the choice of the term '*rôdeur*' is significant, since it evokes a marginal figure who roams or lurks about aimlessly, while the word hermit evokes a solitary figure who lives away from the

[58] Jouy, *L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin*, vol. 1, vi. The hermit: 'Who told you, Sir, who I was? How do you know?" The bookseller: 'I don't suppose that you thought you could remain hidden very long under the guise of your pseudonym.'

[59] Jouy, *L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin*, vol. 1, 6-7. 'The only thing that is left for me to tell you is what I do – nothing, absolutely nothing. I come and go, I watch, I listen, and on my return in the evening, keep a record of all the things I have heard and seen during the day.'

[60] Jouy, *L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin*, N°C, 4 décembre 1813, 'Un jour de spectacle gratis', vol. 4, 324. 'I must admit, either for my glory or my shame, that I do enjoy leaving my cell, roaming around haphazardly, strolling through the streets without a goal; I see, listen and examine; I while away the hours, which shall one day take their toll; I observe others. My favourite place is wherever the crowd gathers.'

[61] Michel-Nicolas Balisson de Rougemont, *Le Rôdeur français, ou Les mœurs du jour. Orné de deux gravures* (Paris: Rosa, 1817), vol. 1, v. 'The French Prowler comes out into the world after l'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin, and we are moving away from the times in which one could make one's fortune at the expense of one's master.'

world. Those terms indicate that both writers are aware of the fact that their activity is still minor, trivial, and regarded as somewhat suspicious. However, they also deliberately present themselves as such and thus start subverting the negative connotations associated with aimless urban wandering.

These Parisian peripatetic writers, through their writings, are clearly trying to move away from the stigma associated with city strolling and pave the way for the popularization of the figure of the *flâneur* which would take place in the physiologies of the following decades. In his 1841 physiology of the *flâneur*, Auguste de Lacroix described both Mercier and Etienne de Jouy's hermit as *flâneurs*: 'Le prétendu ermite de la Chaussée d'Antin est un flâneur émérite qui n'a pu renoncer encore à ses habitudes de jeunesse. L'auteur du *Tableau de Paris* a dû flâner énormément.'[62] The fact that both writers were already being identified as precursors of the *flâneur* in 1841 underlines the pliability and adaptability of the concept of *flânerie*.

Etienne de Jouy's chronicles, whose success may hint at the prevalent sense of perplexity over the changing state of Paris and its society, are at an interesting crossroad. The French and British eighteenth-century tradition of urban observation is still imprinted on Parisian minds, yet urban writing does change in the nineteenth century, both because of the upheaval of 1789 and of the rapidly changing urban environment. The hermit thus starts to take on some of the characteristics of the emerging *flâneur*: he distances himself from the city-environment and begins to address the ambiguous issue of his 'non-activity.' One might say that Jouy's hermit is a polymorphous *flâneur* who picks on the British tradition of urban essay-writing and adapts it to the new, changing Paris environment.

2. A London case-study: Charles Lamb

I would now like to look at a writer who also was a true follower of Addison and Steele, but who took the tradition of urban observation in his own idiosyncratic direction, which resonates in several ways with the then nascent tradition of flâneurial writing. Charles

[62] Auguste de Lacroix, 'Le Flâneur', in Léon Curmer (ed.), *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, 9 vols (Paris: Curmer, 1839-1842), vol. 3, 69. 'The would-be hermit de la Chaussée d'Antin is an experienced *flâneur* who has not had the heart to give up a youthful habit. The author of the *Tableau de Paris* must have *flâneured* a great deal.'

Lamb was a London-born writer who spent his whole life working as a clerk in the city and commuting to work on foot. He wrote a popular series of essays entitled *Essays of Elia* which appeared in *The London Magazine* between 1820 and 1825 and which were eventually published in book form and reprinted many times throughout the century.[63] He imported the Romantic peripatetic tradition from the country to the city and combined it with the eighteenth-century tradition of urban essay-writing, which made for his particular brand of *flânerie.*

Charles Lamb could be seen as the nineteenth-century successor of Mr. Spectator. As was stated earlier, the essay-form was particularly well-suited to the city environment, and in Lamb's case, was intrinsically linked to the metropolitan content of his writing. The *Elia Essays* were originally written for the *London Magazine*, a quintessentially urban publication whose design was to transcribe the energy and diversity of London life by assembling a miscellany of articles reflecting the city's dynamism. Moreover, Elia's rambling, fragmentary style – which concords with the essay form chosen by Lamb – captures and reflects the dynamics of urban spectatorship and is a true instance of what Julian Wolfreys has identified as nineteenth-century urban writing: 'In its play of images nineteenth-century writing maps the condition of the city onto the text itself, so that the text assumes in a variety of ways the shape, the contours, the architecture, and the 'ebb and flows' of the city.'[64] These characteristics, as we will see, also apply to flâneurial writing in general.

However, Charles Lamb was also linked to the Romantic tradition. Although he had no attachments to what he called 'dead nature,'[65] he used the cityscape in the same way the Romantics used the natural landscape to define himself. What is striking in Lamb's writing is the ontological nature of his relations with the city, as is made clear in this letter addressed to the editor of *The Reflector*:

> I was born under the shadow of St. Dunstan's steeple […]. I was born, as you have heard, in a crowd. […] A mob of happy faces crowding up at the pit-door of

[63] Charles Lamb, *Elia. Essays which have appeared under that signature in the London Magazine* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1823), *The Last Essays of Elia. Being a sequel to Essays published under that name.* (London: Edward Moxon, 1833).
[64] Julian Wolfreys, *Writing London: the trace of the urban text from Blake to Dickens* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998), 6.
[65] Charles Lamb, letter to William Wordsworth, 30 January 1801, in Alfred Ainger (ed.), *The Letters of Charles Lamb* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1888), vol. 1, 164.

> Drury Lane Theatre, just at the hour of six, gives me ten thousand sincerer pleasures, than I could ever receive from all the flocks of silly sheep that ever whitened the plains of Arcadia or Epsom Downs. This passion for crowds is nowhere feasted so full as in London. The man must have a rare *recipe* for melancholy who can be dull in Fleet Street. I am naturally inclined to hypochondria, but in London it vanishes, like all other ills. Often, when I have felt a weariness or distaste at home, have I rushed out into her crowded Strand, and fed my humor, till tears have wetted my cheek for unutterable sympathies with the multitudinous moving picture, which she never fails to present at all hours, like the scenes of a shifting pantomime. The very deformities of London, which give distaste to others, from habit do not displease me. […] I love the very smoke of London, because it has been the medium most familiar to my vision. […] Humor, Interest, Curiosity, suck at [London's] measureless breasts without a possibility of being satiated. Nursed amid her noise, her crowds, her beloved smoke, what have I been doing all my life, if I have not lent out my heart with usury to such scenes! […] A LONDONER.[66]

Lamb uses the extended metaphor of London as a suckling mother throughout this letter. He first indicates that he was born at the very heart of London ('under the shadow of St. Dunstan's steeple'), but he then insists that the crowd was his real birthplace. London is seen as an endless source of entertainment which 'nurses' him back to health. The fact that he does not sign the letter by his name but with the words 'A Londoner' confirms the profound links he sees between the capital city and his own identity. He defined himself as a quintessentially urban writer who developed a Romantic metropolitan sensibility, as he explained in a letter to Wordsworth:

> I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and intense local attachments as any of you mountaineers can have done with dead Nature. The lighted shops of the Strand and Fleet Street; the innumerable trades, tradesmen, and customers, coaches, waggons, playhouses; all the bustle and wickedness round about Covent Garden; the very women of the Town; the watchmen, drunken scenes, rattles; life awake, if you awake, at all hours of the night; the impossibility of being dull in Fleet Street; the crowds, the very dirt and

[66] Charles Lamb, "The Londoner." 1802, in Charles Lamb, Mary Lamb, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb* E.V. Lucas (ed.), 7 vols (London: Methuen, 1903-5), vol. 1, 39-40.

> mud, the sun shining upon houses and pavements, the print shops, the old bookstalls, parsons cheapening books, coffee-houses, steams of soups from kitchens, the pantomimes – London itself a pantomime and a masquerade – all these things work themselves into my mind, and feed me, without a power of satiating me. The wonder of these sights impels me into night-walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand from fullness of joy at so much life.[67]

Lamb's paratactic style reflects his enthusiasm for the excess of sights, noises and smells the city has to offer to the urban spectator. The structure of his first sentence mirrors that of a long meandering walk through the streets of London on which the *flâneur* is exposed to the richness and diversity of the metropolis. Despite the abundance of elements which 'feed' his writing and imagination, his appetite can never be 'satiated'[68] – walking is ingestion and digestion for him. Gluttony is one of Lamb's favoured motifs and we are far from that of the dissatisfied, hungry De Quinceyian or Baudelairean *flâneur* in the *Elia Essays*. As Simon Hull points out, Lamb 'reminds us that the prevailing image was still of the gourmand, with the corpulent prince regent, as satirized by Lamb himself, leading by example.'[69] Lamb's writing, both light-hearted and earnest, is rooted in the eighteenth-century essayistic tradition and well as in Romanticism, which makes for his idiosyncratic form of flâneurial writing.

However, despite these different influences, the marginality of his position gave him an outlook on the city which was very much that of a *flâneur*. Unlike the Parisian *flâneur*, Charles Lamb was not a man with an unlimited supply of time on his hands, since he was a clerk for the East India Company for twenty-five years and had to commute to work every day. However, moments of *flânerie* in his texts are always synonymous with moments of suspension or momentary periods of out-of-stepness with the city. To illustrate this point, I would like to dwell on a description of Charles Lamb by Hazlitt:

> Mr. Lamb has succeeded, not by conforming to the Spirit of the Age, but in opposition to it. He *does not march* boldly *along* with the crowd, but *steals off the pavement* to pick his way in the *contrary* direction. He prefers *bye-ways* to highways. When the full tide of human life pours along to some festive show, to

[67] Lamb, letter to William Wordsworth, 30 January 1801, *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, vol. 1, 164–5.
[68] Lamb,. "The Londoner." 1802, *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, vol. 1, 39-40.
[69] Simon P. Hull, *Charles Lamb, Elia and the London Magazine: Metropolitan Muse* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010), 2.

> some pageant of a day, Elia would *stand on one side to look over* an old book-stall, or *stroll down some deserted pathway i*n search of a pensive description over a tottering doorway, or some quaint device in architecture, illustrative of embryo art and ancient manners. Mr. Lamb has the very soul of an antiquarian, as this implies a reflecting humanity; *the film of the past hovers* forever before him.[70] (My italics)

Hazlitt insists on Lamb's outsider's position within the crowd and within the space of the city: he physically steps to the side and even chooses to go in the opposite direction to the crowd, and prefers meandering pathways to straight highways. But these images also evoke the idea of a *flâneur* who decides to step into a different temporality and into the past. This spatial and temporal outsideness gives him a different vantage point on the city which is very much in tune with that of the *flâneur*. This the marginal position is emphasized in the essay 'The View from the South-Sea House,' where Lamb identifies the reader with a commuter on his way to work: 'Reader, in thy passage from the Bank […] didst thou never observe a melancholy looking handsome, brick and stone edifice, to the left?'[71] True observation necessitates a slowing down for the passer-by – and the reader: the commuter must stop his purposeful, mechanical movements across the city to examine the building, just as the reader must pause and reflect as Lamb's flâneurial writing takes him back into time: 'This was once a house of trade, -- a centre of busy interests. The throng of merchants was here -- the quick pulse of gain -- and here some forms of business are still kept up, though the soul be long since fled. Here are still to be seen stately porticos; imposing staircases.'[72] Through his description which hovers between the present and the past, Lamb's flâneurial writing makes us step into a different temporality. Simon Hull's comments on Lamb's position within the city could apply word for word to the *flâneur*'s: 'Lamb was at once detached from that 'crowd' and located, by virtue of the insight afforded by such detachment, at the epicenter.'[73]

Although Lamb's specific brand of *flânerie* was very much tied to the British context, his marginal position mirrored that of the French *flâneur*, partly because of their common London ancestry, and partly because the urban contexts in Paris and London created similar

[70] William Hazlitt, *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, P.P. Howe (ed.), 21 vols (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1930-34), vol. 11, 178-9.
[71] Lamb, 'The View from the South-Sea House', *Essays of Elia* in *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, vol . 2, 142.
[72] Lamb, 'The View from the South-Sea House', 142.
[73] Hull, *Charles Lamb, Elia and the London Magazine*, 2.

conditions for urban walkers. Thus, the persona created by Jouy and Lamb – *L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin* and Elia – are antecedents of the *flâneur* which point to the *flâneur*'s characteristic hybridity and which are central examples of the cross-pollination that takes place between Paris and London at the beginning of the century.

IV. Polymorphism and Evolution – The Paradoxes of the *Flâneur* of the Physiologies

> Avez-vous jamais réfléchi à tout ce que renferme ce mot de flânerie, ce mot délicieux, adoré des poëtes et des humoristes ?[74]

This section of my analysis will examine how physiologies might confirm the claim that the *flâneur* was from the very start a highly polymorphous figure. Physiologies were a hugely popular genre of illustrated books depicting social types or customs in a witty manner, which proliferated in the 1830s and 40s. The introduction to these physiologies often stated that their *raison d'être* was the fast-changing nature of the city:

> Dans La Bruyère, le chapitre *de la Mode* est naturellement un des chapitres qui ont le moins vieilli. Il en est de ce sujet éternel comme des images que reflète le *Daguerréotype*, l'instrument tout nouveau. Ce sera bien, si vous voulez, le même paysage que reproduira la chambre obscure, mais, comme pas une heure du jour ne ressemble à l'heure précédente, pas un de ces tableaux, représentant le même aspect de la terre ou du ciel, ne sera semblable aux tableaux précédents.[75]

The city was perceived as a profoundly protean entity, and the *flâneur*'s development mirrored that process. At this stage, these physiologies of the *flâneur* belonged to the light-hearted, commercial, ephemeral and often underrated world of popular print culture, and the

[74] Victor Fournel, *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris* [1855] (Paris: Adolphe Delahays, 1858), 262. 'Have you ever thought about all that is contained in the word *flânerie*, this exquisite word which poets and humourists alike adore?'

[75] Jules Janin, 'Introduction', *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, vol. 1, xiv. 'In La Bruyère's work, the chapter entitled 'Of Fashion' is naturally amongst those which have aged the least. The same holds for this eternal subject as for the newly-invented daguerreotype. The *camera obscura* can take many pictures of the same landscape, but, just as one hour of the day differs from the next, not one of these tableaux, representing the exact same part of the sky or of the earth, will be similar.'

flâneur had none of the associations with high culture and literature which he would later acquire, which again testifies to the remarkable adaptability of the figure. Richard Sieburth explains that, although expensive big-format albums of physiologies such as Curmer's *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* would appear in the 1840s,

> the physiologies were aimed instead at the buyer off the street. Sold at one franc apiece when the going price of a book was three francs fifty, the *physiologies* were clearly conceived with a mass audience in mind. One of their most salient features was their standardized paperback format and their marketing as a uniform collection or series. To sample the varied gallery of stereotypes, one had merely to pluck to requisite volume from the bookseller's shelf as if selecting items exhibited in a shopwindow.[76]

Physiologies described the characteristics of social groups or types (such as the concierge, the convict, the scrivener, the spinster…) and borrowed their classification methods from the flourishing field of empirical or 'life' sciences.[77] During the first decades of the nineteenth century, urban crowds evoked, on one hand, a sense of change and stimulus, but on the other hand, one of oppression and alienation. Physiologies can be seen as a response to this new phenomenon, their main function being one of reassurance. Borrowing language from the field of science contributed to reinforcing this comforting discourse. Lavater's physiognomical principles were still widely circulated at the time, although his theories were received with different degrees of scepticism. According to him, one could learn to identify people's personality characteristics by scrutinizing their features, mannerisms and gestures:

> All knowledge we can obtain of man (in his tripartite animal, intellectual, and moral life) must be gained through the medium of our senses… Man must wander in the darkest ignorance, equally with respect to himself and the objects that surround him, did he not become acquainted with their properties and powers by the aid of their externals.[78]

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[76] Richard Sieburth, 'Same Difference: The French Physiologies, 1840–1842', in Norman Cantor (ed.), *Notebooks in Cultural Analysis I*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1984), pp. 163–200, (p. 166).

[77] See Figure 1. Paul Gavarni, 'Le flâneur,' in Léon Curmer (ed.), *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, 1841, engraving.

[78] Johann Caspar Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente*, quoted in John Graham, *Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Bern, Las Vegas: Lang, 1979), 47.

The physiologies and articles produced at the time often used or even parodied the scientific idiom to portray the 'types' they described and offered interesting examples of cultural transfer from the field of biological science to that of social sciences, as is the case in this 1831 description of the *flâneur*:

> Les capitales sont des nids de flâneurs: Paris en abonde. Comme les crabes sur les sables d'Afrique, les flâneurs sortent de leur gîte le matin, pour grouiller sur les boulevards, sur les quais, sur les ponts, partout où il y a un rayon de soleil, un espace conquis sur la boue, un spectacle gratis.[79]

During that period, the *flâneur* does indeed become a 'type', and the word *flâneur* truly becomes part of the Parisians' everyday speech, as Ourry's 1836 definition of the term in Boiste's *Dictionnaire de la conversation et de la lecture* indicates: 'Le nouveau dictionnaire de l'Académie française n'a pas encore accordé à ce mot et au verbe flâner leurs grandes lettres de naturalisation. Tous deux n'en font pas moins désormais partie de notre langage familier.'[80]

I shall now closely examine three physiologies of the *flâneur*, the anonymous 1831 'Le Flâneur à Paris,' from Pierre-François Ladvocat's *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un*,[81] Auguste de Lacroix's 'Le Flâneur' from Léon Curmer's *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*,[82] and Louis Huart's 1841 *Physiologie du flâneur*.[83] I shall also refer to a 1831 *Figaro* article entitled 'Le flâneur parisien,'[84] which, although not a physiology, dates from the same period. The sheer number of physiologies produced during this period marks a radical shift. We move from a few marginal, isolated and eccentric flâneurial figures to a recognizable type who is being described, portrayed, sketched, and caricatured abundantly, which points to a desire to come to grips with the city on a much greater scale.

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[79] 'Le flâneur parisien', *Figaro*, 13 Novembre 1831, 2. 'Capitals are the nesting places of *flâneurs*: Paris is full of them. Just like crabs in African sands, *flâneurs* emerge from their dwellings in the morning to mill about the boulevards, the quays, the bridges – wherever there is a ray of sunlight, be it a spot in the mud that he conquered for himself, or a free show.'

[80] Boiste, *Dictionnaire de la conversation et de la lecture*, dir. W.Duckett, 52 vols (Belin-Mandar, 1832-1839), vol. 27, 1836, 196. 'The new dictionary of the *Académie française* has not yet given its credentials to this word and to the verb *flâner*. Both words are nevertheless now part of our everyday language.'

[81] Anonymous contributor, 'Le Flâneur à Paris', in Pierre-François Ladvocat (ed.), *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un*, 15 vols (Paris: Ladvocat, 1831-1834), vol. 6, 95-110.

[82] Lacroix, 'Le Flâneur', vol. 3, pp.64-78.

[83] Louis Huart, *Physiologie du flâneur* (Paris: Aubert et Cie, 1841).

[84] 'Le flâneur parisien', *Figaro*, 13 Novembre 1831, 2.

Interestingly, the shifting nature of the *flâneur* is foregrounded in several physiologies. The physiology 'Le Flâneur à Paris' begins by introducing the *flâneur* as a profoundly protean figure – he is a necessity for 'any modern civilisation' and has been present under some form or other 'since the Creation.' This figure can be found 'roaming through the Garden of Eden in the shape of a serpent', or later wandering the globe 'under the guise of the poet, the wise man' – he is 'Homer, Herodotus and Pythagoras.'[85] Lacroix too describes the *flâneur* as a malleable, shape-shifting figure:

> Le flâneur est un être essentiellement complexe, il n'a pas de goût particulier, il a tous les goûts; il comprend tout, il est susceptible d'éprouver toutes les passions, explique tous les travers et a toujours une excuse prête pour toutes les faiblesses. C'est une nature nécessairement malléable, une organisation d'artiste.[86]

Thus, through a close reading of these popular physiologies, I hope to foreground the paradoxes inherent to this constantly changing figure.

1. A Parisian figure?

One of the most striking features of the *flâneur* in these physiologies is that he is flaunted as exclusively belonging to Paris. While in his 1836 definition, Boiste describes Paris

[85] Anon., 'Le Flâneur à Paris', *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un*, vol. 6, 96-7. 'Le flâneur, premier besoin d'un âge avancé, est à mes yeux la plus haute expression de la civilisation moderne non pas que je donne à son existence une date récente; je vois en lui, au contraire, un contemporain de la création. Il erre, sous la figure du serpent, dans le paradis terrestre […]. Plus tard, appuyé sur le bâton du poète, ou caché sous le manteau du sage, il parcourt les sommités du globe éclairées par les premiers rayons d'une raison douteuse. C'est Homère visitant les cités de la Grèce antique; recueillant leurs traditions, leurs dieux, leurs combats, leurs héros, et formant, de l'ensemble de ces récits fabuleux, l'œuvre la plus élevée qu'ait enfantée l'imagination humaine. C'est Hérodote allant, sur les bords du Nil, visiter pieusement le berceau des sciences et des arts de sa patrie, pour transmettre à la postérité le fruit de ses curieuses recherches. C'est Pythagore portant jusqu'au Gange sa course vagabonde, et, comme l'abeille, composant le miel de sa philosophie, des tributs réunis, par son habile picorée, en mille lieux divers.' ('The flâneur is the first necessity of any new Age and in my view is the highest expression of modern civilization. Not that I think that his existence is at all recent. On the contrary, I see him as someone who was contemporary with Creation. He could already be found roaming in the Garden of Eden in the shape of a serpent. Later, leaning on the staff of the poet, or concealed under the guise of the wise man, he climbed the summits of the globe, enlightened by the first rays of uncertain Reason. He is Homer visiting the cities of Ancient Greece, collecting stories about their traditions, their gods, their battles, their heroes, and, with these fabulous tales, creating the highest work of Art human imagination has ever conceived. He is Herodotus, making a pilgrimage to see the cradle of his country's Science and Art on the banks of the Nile to pass on to future generations the findings of his curious quest. He is Pythagoras, wandering and roaming all the way to the Ganges, and, like the bee, composing the honey of his philosophy out of the nectar he skillfully gathered in a thousand places.')

[86] Lacroix, 'Le Flâneur', 67. 'The *flâneur* is in essence a complex being, he does not have any particular taste, he has all tastes; he understands everything, he is likely to experience all passions, can explain away all foibles and always has a ready excuse for weaknesses. His nature is to be malleable, like an artist's composition.'

as a 'land of plenty'[87] for the *flâneur*, for the anonymous author of 'Le Flâneur à Paris,' 'the *flâneur* can be born anywhere – but he can only live in Paris.'[88] Similarly, Auguste de Lacroix opens his text by proclaiming the *flâneur* to be the epitome of Frenchness,[89] and then adds that 'the *flâneur* assuredly comes from and inhabits a large city, which, without a doubt, is Paris.'[90] Not only does the *flâneur* belong to Paris, but he becomes a defining feature of the French capital, the representation of which becomes unthinkable without the presence of the *flâneur*.[91]

However, the author then insists on the fact that the most remarkable *flâneurs* are not originally from Paris. For him, the best way to observe the French capital implies uprooting one's gaze or applying a foreign gaze to the city. For him, the wit of the Irish and Scottish writer Anthony Hamilton,[92] who wrote in French, epitomizes the spirit of the *flâneur*. Hamilton was famous for his satiric literary style, which was deemed to be more decidedly French than that of many a Frenchman:

> Je dois me hâter de consigner ici une remarque: le flâneur ne saurait se former par un séjour continu à Paris, et, il faut l'avouer, […] les flâneurs les plus recommandables sont nés quelquefois sous d'autres cieux. N'y aurait-il pas, dans ce phénomène, quelque chose d'analogue à celui que nous offre Hamilton, Écossais d'origine, Irlandais de naissance, et dont les écrits composés dans notre langue, brillent par excellence de cette grâce légère, de cette fleur de plaisanterie piquante et naïve, qui semblent le génie distinctif de l'idiome français?[93]

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[87] Boiste, *Dictionnaire de la conversation et de la lecture*, 1836, 196. 'Il serait impossible de suivre les traces de tous les flâneurs de la capitale, car c'est pour eux […] que Paris est un pays de Cocagne.' 'It would be impossible to follow all the flâneurs of the capital, because to them, […] Paris is a Land of Plenty.'

[88] Anon, 'Le Flâneur à Paris', 98. 'Le flâneur peut naître partout; il ne sait vivre qu'à Paris.'

[89] Lacroix, 'Le Flâneur', 65. 'Connaissez-vous un signe plus approprié à son idée, un mot plus exclusivement français pour exprimer une personnification toute française ?' 'Do you know of any idea which would be more fitting to the idea of Frenchness, of a word which would personify Frenchness more completely?'

[90] Lacroix, 'Le Flâneur', 65. 'Le flâneur est, sans contredit, originaire et habitant d'une vaste cité, de Paris assurément.'

[91] Anon, 'Le Flâneur à Paris', 99. 'Représenter Paris sans lui, ce serait peindre une chambre des députés sans le général D. un bat sans la princesse B. une conspiration sans les honnêtes gens qui se vantent de n'avoir pas fait autre chose depuis seize ans.' 'To represent Paris without him would be like describing the country's parliament without General D., a fight without Princess B., or a conspiracy without the honest people who make out that they have done little else for the past sixteen years.'

[92] Anthony [Antoine] Hamilton, Count Hamilton in the French nobility (1644/5?–1719), courtier and author. […]Hamilton's four 'contes' [*Le Bélier*, *Fleur d'Epine*, *Zeneyde* and *Les quatre Facardins*, which were published posthumously in 1730 and 1731], had a considerable influence in eighteenth-century France. (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: OUP, 2004).

[93] Anon, 'Le Flâneur à Paris', 99. 'I must hasten to add here that the *flâneur* would not become one if he were to reside in Paris permanently, and one must admit […] that some of the most commendable *flâneurs* were born in

It is interesting to note here that the writer whom he sees as epitomizing the spirit of *flânerie* hailed from Britain. The trope of the foreign gaze does endure throughout the century. Alfred Delvau, in the 1860 preface to *Les Dessous de Paris*, also uses the metaphor of the explorer to introduce his own reconnaissance of the very depths of Paris: 'Mais ne serait-il pas bon de savoir comment naissent, vivent, mangent, aiment et meurent les Caraïbes et les Peaux-Rouges de Paris?'[94]

The first paradox that seems to emerge from these physiologies is that the *flâneur* is defined as quintessentially Parisian, yet is not necessarily of Parisian origin – he must apply the gaze of the outsider to the city to be able to behold and examine it properly.

2. An invisible type?

As in previous texts, the *flâneur* is to be found in all public places, on the streets and boulevards of Paris, in parks, restaurants, cafés, or in the foyer of theatres, but never in interior spaces. The *Figaro* article humorously designates the street as the *flâneur*'s drawing room: 'La rue est le salon du flâneur. Ses meubles sont les montres de bijoutiers, les étalages de marchands de gravures, enfin toute l'exubérance des murs de Paris.'[95] This striking image heralds Walter Benjamin's famous image of the street as the *flâneur*'s *intérieur*: '*flânerie* can transform Paris into one great interior' (AP [M3, 2], 422). The physiologist of 'Le flâneur à Paris' goes as far as describing the *flâneur* as someone who sheds his real identity as soon as he steps out onto the pavement:

> L'existence du flâneur est tout en dehors; elle se passe au grand jour. […] Tant qu'il n'a pas franchi le seuil de sa porte, le flâneur n'est qu'un homme comme un autre: un général en retraite, un professeur émérite, un ancien négociant, un diplomate en disponibilité, que sais-je! […] Quand il a touché le sol de la rue,

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other climes. In this phenomenon, there might be something similar to the case offered by Hamilton who was a gentleman of Scottish extraction born in Ireland. His work, which was written in our language, shines with the light elegance and the sharp and artless wit, which seems to be the distinctive genius of the French idiom.'

[94] Alfred Delvau, *Les Dessous de Paris* (Paris: Poulet-Malassis et de Broise, 1860), 8. 'But would it not be useful to know how the Caribs and the Red Indians of Paris are born, live, eat, love and die?'

[95] Anon, 'Le flâneur parisien', *Figaro*, 2. 'The street is the *flâneur*'s drawing room. His furnishings are the jeweller's watches, the window displays of the print shops, in sum all the exuberance of the Paris walls.'

> humé la poussière du boulevard ou le brouillard de la Seine, il entre en action […]. Aussi bien le flâneur n'a guère d'intérieur à lui; qu'en ferait-il?[96]

These examples show the extent to which the *flâneur*'s presence pervades the mid-century Parisian cityscape. They also insist on the notion of the street as an *intérieur*, which is a notion which will endure since it is a key notion for Benjamin – the *flâneur*'s *intérieur* is filled with the other and otherness. As can be seen in the afore-mentioned passages, after declaring the *flâneur*'s dwelling place to be the Parisian streets, physiologists consistently insist on differentiating between the *flâneur* and other city types he might be mistaken for.

'Rien de plus commun que le nom, rien de plus rare que la chose !'[97] claims Louis Huart in the opening statement of his *Physiologie du flâneur*. The *flâneur* is not to be confused with common passers-by, loafers or rubbernecks. As indicated in Boiste's dictionary, 'the *flâneur* is a variety which is to be distinguished from the species of the *musard,*'[98] and indeed all physiologies insist on the differences which distinguish the *flâneur* from the more common *badaud* or *musard*.

> Nous ne prostituons pas le titre de flâneur à ces sortes de contrefaçons plus ou moins ridicules […] qui promènent, tout le long du jour, leur oisiveté ennuyée et ennuyeuse. […] Le flâneur est au badaud ce qu'est le gourmet au glouton. […] Le badaud marche pour marcher, s'amuse de tout, se prend à tout indistinctement, rit sans motif et regarde sans voir. […] Il y a, entre ces deux espèces d'êtres organisés, tous les degrés de la création, toute la distance qui sépare l'homme du polype.[99]

These attempts at differentiating the *flâneur* from other members of the crowd recur regularly in all physiologies. These texts also dwell on the way the *flâneur* stands, moves, expresses

[96] Anon, 'Le flâneur à Paris', 100. 'The entire existence of the *flâneur* unfolds outdoors – in broad daylight. Before stepping over the threshold of his door, the *flâneur* is a man like any other: a retired general, a professor emeritus, a former merchant, a diplomat on halfpay or goodness knows what else! […] No sooner has he stepped onto the street and inhaled the dust of the boulevard or the fog of the Seine that he stirs into action. […] The *flâneur* might as well not have his own interior, what would he do with it?'

[97] Huart, *Physiologie du flâneur*, 10. 'Nothing is more common than the name, nothing is rarer than the real thing!'

[98] Boiste, *Dictionnaire de la conversation et de la lecture*, 196. 'le *flâneur* est une variété distincte de l'espèce *musarde*.'

[99] Lacroix, 'Le Flâneur', 65-66. 'We do not prostitute the title of *flâneur* by attaching it to those more or less ridiculous imitators […] who walk around all day long and display their tiresome and irritating idleness. […]The *flâneur* is to the idler what the gourmet is to the glutton. […] The idler walks for the sake of walking, finds everything amusing and takes an interest in everything indiscriminately, laughs without cause and observes without seeing. Between these two species of organised beings are all the stages of creation, all the distance which separates man from a polyp.'

himself and looks: 'Le voyez-vous mon *flâneur*, le parapluie sous le bras, les mains croisées derrière le dos.'[100] These painstakingly precise elements of description of the *flâneur*'s outward appearance are accompanied by illustrations which all represent the *flâneur* as a well-dressed man in a black coat and a top hat, carrying a walking stick or an umbrella.

This, however, is nothing more than the public, official attire of the city bourgeois. The *Figaro* article, which, interestingly, is not a physiology, ironically comments on the absolute banality of the *flâneur*'s outward appearance: 'Le flâneur fleurit de vingt à trente-cinq ans; il n'est ni grand ni petit, plutôt grand pour regarder au-dessus de la foule. Il se lève à neuf heures, boit du café au lait, se brosse, lustre sa chaussure et sort.'[101] Here we come to a central paradox of the *flâneur*. Physiologies were written with the express purpose of identifying and classifying the types one might encounter on the streets of Paris to assuage people's fear of these new types. Since the social texture was viewed as more richly interconnected than in the previous century, one might say this typecasting was an attempt at delineating and literally *making* the social body. Paradoxically, however, physiologies of the *flâneur* strived to define, describe and pin down a figure who was utterly anonymous and unrecognizable in his outward appearance – a figure, in fact, who might even be seen as the most elusive of city types. They attempted to make this essentially inconspicuous and undefinable figure visible and recognizable. The *flâneur*, unlike the myriad of types described in the physiologies published in that period, wore the uniform of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie and thus lacked all the signs and traces which could make his identity ascertainable, and this illegibility draws on and feeds into his profoundly protean nature. But this anonymity and indecipherability contrasted sharply with the legibility of other urban types which were exposed alongside these portraits of the *flâneur*. In Louis Huart's 1841 *Physiologie du flâneur*, Huart uses the first half of the physiology to describe who the *flâneur* is not, but might be mistaken for ('un rentier, un promeneur du dimanche, un musard, un badeau, un batteur de pavé, un chiffonier'[102]). According to him, only poets, artists and law clerks can be true *flâneurs*: 'Il n'y a peut-être que trois classes de la société chez qui l'on

[100] Anon, 'Le Flâneur à Paris', 101. 'Picture my *flâneur* with his umbrella under his arm and his hands behind his back.'
[101] 'Le flâneur parisien', *Figaro*, 2. 'The *flâneur* is in his prime between the ages of twenty and thirty-five; he is neither tall nor short, but, more often than not, tall, so as to gaze over the heads of the crowd. He gets up at nine, drinks his *café au lait*, combs his hair, polishes his shoes and strolls out.'
[102] 'a *rentier*, a Sunday stroller, a loafer, a rubberneck, a lounger, a rag-picker.'

trouve des cœurs et des jambes véritablement dignes d'appartenir à un flâneur – ces trois classes se composent des poètes, des artistes, et des petits clercs d'avoués.'[103]

Physiologies tend to confirm the *flâneur*'s malleable and shifting nature – he is a mirror of the society he observes, which makes him curiously transparent and elusive. All the physiologies of the *flâneur* published at the time documented his paradoxical identity, and pointed out that his unobtrusive appearance concealed an exceptional nature. As Mary Gluck indicates, 'the more invisible he became, the more legible became the social and professional identities of others. In the guise of an observer who could not be observed, the *flâneur* occupied a privileged, even transcendental, position within urban modernity.'[104] These numerous and constant shifts in the *flâneur*'s representation and that of his vision pose the important question of his status and role.

3. From a passive observer, to a reader of modern life, to a producer of text

This section of my analysis will focus on four texts produced within a ten-year time span (1831-1841).[105] By confronting the physiology 'Le Flâneur à Paris' and the article 'Le Flâneur parisien,' both of which were written in 1831, and two 1841 physiologies, Lacroix's 'Le Flâneur' and Louis Huart's *Physiologie du flâneur*, I hope to highlight the paradoxical and changing nature of the *flâneur* who, from being an somewhat passive idler, morphs into a skilled observer of city life during that period.

In 'Le Flâneur à Paris,' the *flâneur* is described as a peaceful and discerning observer who takes in the cityscape for his own personal enjoyment.[106] The *Figaro* article entitled 'Le

[103] Huart, *Physiologie du flâneur*, 55. 'There are perhaps only three categories of society in which one might find hearts and legs truly worthy of belonging to a *flâneur* – these three categories are that of poets, artists and law clerks.'
[104] Mary Gluck, 'The *Flâneur* and the Aesthetic: Appropriation of Urban Culture in Mid-19th-Century Paris', *Theory Culture Society*, 20:5 (2003), 53-80, (pp.68-9).
[105] Although it will occasionally refer to other texts.
[106] Anon, 'Le Flâneur à Paris', 107-108. 'Les événements politiques ont peu de prise sur la vie du flâneur; il pourrait même faire son profit des révolutions qui viennent renouveler son champ d'observation; mais il est assez peu égoïste pour ne pas les aimer. D'ailleurs l'émeute, l'émeute hideuse et stupide, lui est en horreur.' 'Political events have little influence over the *flâneur*'s life. He could even make good use of revolutions, which renew his field of observation; but he is benevolent enough not to like them. As a matter of fact, he loathes mindless, monstrous riots.'

flâneur parisien,'[107] which was written in November 1831, interestingly remains a lot closer to the derogatory 1808 definition of the *flâneur*, and might be seen as a parody of the physiology published earlier in the same year. It portrays the *flâneur* as an obtuse rubberneck who will stare at people and events whatever the cost. 'Le flâneur aime l'émeute. Pendant les trois journées, quelques flâneurs ont été tués, non le fusil à la main, mais au coin des rues, tendant le cou.'[108] He is precisely represented as the obnoxious and mundane *badaud* from which physiologies were anxious to distance him. The *Figaro* article also derides the physiology's carefully crafted and precise distinctions between *flâneur*, *badaud* and *musard* by comparing the *flâneur* to the figures of the knave, the parasite and the spy: 'Ne confondons pas le gueux, le parasite et l'espion avec le *flâneur*. Les nuances font les choses. S'il vous demande un service, il ne le mendiera pas; s'il s'assied à votre table, c'est pour accepter un petit verre et avoir l'air d'avoir diné avec vous; s'il vous écoute, c'est pour que vous l'amusiez une heure.'[109] It is clear that in 1831, while the physiology 'Le flâneur à Paris' is trying to raise the status of the *flâneur*, this omnipresent figure of the Parisian cityscape remains ambiguous and generates contradictory reactions in the popular press.

However, one should note that the parodic mode adopted in 'Le flâneur parisien' is not altogether derogatory. The prosaic comparisons, farcical parallels and strategies of accumulation and exaggeration which are adopted here all contribute to undermine the *flâneur*. However, these can only be effective if the original reference, the *flâneur*, is recognizable and well-known to the public. The relationship between parody and its object is always ambivalent, since it strives for independence, opposition and subversion, but by doing so, imitates, adheres to and depends on its model and thus contributes to its literary fame and canonization, as Daniel Sangsue points out: 'Loin de déprécier son objet, la transformation parodique contribu[e] au contraire à son éclat, comme une facette de sa consécration. Au dix-neuvième siècle, tout succès de librairie ou de scène générait systématiquement ses doubles

[107] 'Le flâneur parisien', *Figaro*, 13 Novembre 1831, 2.
[108] 'Le flâneur parisien', *Figaro*, 13 Novembre 1831, 2. 'The *flâneur* enjoys riots. During the July Revolution, a few of them were killed, not rifle in hand, but craning their necks from behind street corners.'
[109] 'Le flâneur parisien', *Figaro*, 'Let us not confuse the knave, the parasite, or the spy with the *flâneur*. The difference lies in the nuances. If he asks for a favour, he will not beg for it. If he comes to sit at your table, it is only to accept a quick drink to appear to have dined with you; if he listens to you, it is because he wishes you to entertain him for an hour or so.'

parodiques, souvent en grand nombre.'[110] The parody 'Le flâneur parisien' is a reverse form of recognition which confirms that the *flâneur* is already a distinctive figure who is part and parcel of the urban scene in 1831 and which participates in the construction of the *flâneur*'s omnipresence and prominence. More generally, the constant repetitions and redraftings of the *flâneur* in the physiologies, are what create *l'original* in Derrida's sense: 'L'original se donne en se modifiant, […] il vit et survit en mutation.'[111] The *flâneur* is an original figure because he is constantly being doubled, redoubled, and thus reworked, modified and updated in both visual and verbal discourse.

Thus, progressively, this suspicious, apparently unoccupied and passive figure becomes an indispensable observer of the urban landscape and the Demiurge who orders the chaos of the modern city. In *Le Livre des Cent-et-un*, he is described as the centre around which city movements are organised, the city appearing as a spectacle produced for the *flâneur* to enjoy and consume: 'Tout, autour de lui, ne paraît marcher, courir, se croiser, que pour occuper ses yeux, provoquer ses réflexions, animer son existence de ce mouvement loin duquel sa pensée languit.'[112] As can be seen in this example, the image of the all-seeing deity is often conjured up to endorse the *flâneur*'s observations. The *Figaro* article facetiously distorts this image: 'C'est pour lui que les bornes-fontaines coulent, que le soleil luit, que les réverbères sont allumés, que les bornes garantissent des fiacres, que les ponts ont des bancs.'[113] In this example, once again, the physiology praises the *flâneur*'s subtle appreciation of the cityscape while the *Figaro* article ironically subverts this statement and derides the *flâneur*'s sense of entitlement by replacing the *flâneur*'s observations by truisms. Physiologies thus clearly attempted to correct and refine the *flâneur*'s image but could not entirely do away with the negative connotations which were attached to the term. Even the 1836 dictionary conveys the sense of a slightly absurd activity: 'C'est lui qui, tous les jours, quand il fait beau,

[110] Daniel Sangsue, *La relation parodique* (Paris: José Corti, 2007), 109. 'Far from depreciating its object, parodic transformation, on the contrary, contributes to its lustre, and is one facet of its consecration. In the nineteenth century, every bookshop or stage success generated numerous parodic doubles.'
[111] Jacques Derrida, 'Des tours de Babel', in *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987), 217. 'The original gives itself in modifying itself. […] it lives and lives on in mutation.' (Jacques Derrida, 'Des tours de Babel', in Peggy Kamuf, Elizabeth Rottenberg (eds.), *Inventions of the Other, Volume 1* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 206.)
[112] Anon, 'Le Flâneur à Paris', 101. 'Everybody around him seems to walk, run, or cross only in order to occupy his eye, to provoke his reflections, to stimulate his existence with that movement without which his mind grows weary.'
[113] 'Le flâneur parisien', *Figaro*, 2. 'It is for him that water flows from street-fountains, that the sun shines, that street lamps glow, that there are hackney stands, that bridges have benches.'

va voir où en est la colonne de Juillet, Et si l'Arc-de-l'Étoile commence à se finir.'[114] There is a persistent, if only slight uneasiness around the amount of free time he enjoys.

That sense of disquietude can be perceived even in later physiologies:

> Pour ceux qui font consister la paresse dans l'absence de toute occupation suivie, de tout travail régulier et d'une utilité immédiate, assurément le flâneur est éminemment paresseux. Il faut remarquer néanmoins que l'homme le plus occupé n'est pas l'homme le plus affairé, et que le travail n'est pas toujours une chose appréciable à l'œil. Le flâneur, il est vrai, produit peu, mais il amasse beaucoup.[115]

However, by opposing what some might see as the idleness and passivity of the *flâneur* to the agitation which characterizes the busy man, Lacroix re-appropriates the word 'idleness' and suggests that the *flâneur*'s apparent inactivity and loitering might be more valuable than the restlessness of the busy man. Ross Chambers has underlined the fact that loitering might be construed as 'a certain recalcitrance to the laws that maintain "good order." In doing so, it carries an implied social criticism. It casts serious doubt on the values good citizens hold dear – values like discipline, method, organization, rationality, productivity, and, above all, work.'[116] Loitering is perceived as subversive precisely because it takes the guise of innocent and insignificant entertainment. Valuing the insubordinate idleness which is inherent to *flânerie* is an idea which will develop and persist throughout and beyond the century. To give but one example, in her 1930 essay 'Street haunting,' Virginia Woolf derides the necessity of 'doing something' and claims the right to meander aimlessly through the city: 'One must, one always must, do something or other; it is not allowed one simply to enjoy oneself. Was it not for this reason that, some time ago, we fabricated the excuse, and invented the necessity of buying something?'[117] Here, useless consumption – buying a pencil – serves as an excuse to enjoy the delightfully subversive activity of not being busy, of having no business, and of wandering the streets without a specific purpose. Yet, the eagerness with which all these texts

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[114] Boiste, *Dictionnaire de la conversation et de la lecture*, 1836, 196. 'He is the sort of man who, when the weather is nice, strolls out to look at the progress of the construction of the *Colonne de Juillet* and to check if that of *the Arc de l'Étoile* is nearing completion.'

[115] Lacroix, 'Le Flâneur', 68. 'For those for whom idleness consists in the absence of uninterrupted occupation, regular work and immediate usefulness, the *flâneur* most certainly is idle. One must nevertheless remark that the busiest man is not the most active one, and that work cannot always be appreciated by the eye. The *flâneur* admittedly produces few things, but he gathers many.'

[116] Ross Chambers, *Loiterature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 9.

[117] Virginia Woolf, 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure' [1930], in David Bradshaw, *Virginia Woolf, Selected Essays* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 185.

confront this suspicion of idleness underlines the anxiety which revolves around this roaming figure with time and leisure on his hands.

Lacroix, however, does end this statement on a crucial image, that of the *flâneur* as an active and useful figure, that of the collector, which calls to mind Benjamin's parallels between the figures of the *flâneur*, the collector, the ragpicker and the detective. 'Le flâneur à Paris' also clearly attempts to redefine the *flâneur*'s strolling as a valuable activity:

> Rien n'échappe à son regard investigateur: une nouvelle disposition dans l'étalage de ce magasin somptueux, une lithographie qui se produit pour la première fois en public, les progrès d'une construction qu'on croyait interminable, un visage inaccoutumé sur ce boulevard dont il connaît chaque habitant et chaque habitué, tout l'intéresse, tout est pour lui un texte d'observations.[118]

This description of the city as a text transforms the *flâneur* into a reader and interpreter of modern life with a privileged relation to art. As Richard Sieburth put it, 'a mobile mirror at the vortex of the crowd, the *flâneur* provides the perfect perspective from which the city may be seized as a spectacle which surrounds its observer like a diorama, its images ranged around a vacant centre like so many items in a shop window beckoning the observer into reverie.'[119] Here, the *flâneur* appears as an interpreter who reorganises the city's images and messages to make it intelligible to the reader.

The *flâneur*, then, is a figure who is endowed with the power to decipher the fluctuating urban palimpsest, captures the essence of modernity and enables his contemporaries to understand it. In this more daring, inquiring *flâneur*, there is an element of subversion in his deliberately slow pace, which stands in stark contrast with the ever-accelerating tempo of the city – *flânerie* implies a form of deceleration which subverts efficiency. Moreover, the absence of direction in the *flâneur*'s wanderings and meandering contrasts with the purposeful and fixed trajectories of city workers: 'Le plus léger incident, une feuille qui vole, un pied mignon, une taille bien prise, qu'il veut perdre de vue le plus tard

[118] Anon, 'Le Flâneur à Paris', 101. 'Nothing escapes his searching eye: a new arrangement in the display of an elegant store, a lithograph first seen in public, progress in the construction of a building which everyone thought was never-ending, a new face amongst the inhabitants and regulars of the boulevard, whom he all knows; he takes an interest in everything and everything is a text of observations for him.'
[119] Sieburth, 'Same Difference: The French Physiologies, 1840–1842', 187.

possible, décideront de la direction qu'il va suivre.'[120] This subversive element is neatly encapsulated in the following extract from 'Le Flâneur à Paris:'

> Aussi, comme sa marche est lente, comme il revient sur ses pas, comme lui seul est là pour y être, tandis que les autres n'y sont que pour se rendre ailleurs! Entouré de gens qui ont l'air de poursuivre, pendant toute la journée, un quart d'heure qu'ils ont perdu le matin, il est maître de son temps et de lui-même il savoure le plaisir de respirer, de regarder, d'être calme au milieu de cette agitation empressée; de vivre enfin: ainsi le Turc assis dans un cimetière de Constantinople, s'enivre des inspirations de l'opium, des flots de fumée qui s'échappent de ses lèvres, et de la brise embaumée que lui envoient les côtes d'Asie.[121]

The hustle and bustle of the city, the jostling crowd of people running after time lost is opposed to the leisurely pace of the *flâneur* relishing the unlimited expanse of time he has to observe city life unfolding around him. The regal image of the opium-smoking Turk conjures up an altogether different space, a timeless zone which puts the *flâneur* on a separate plane from that of the city. This simile brings together the figure of the *flâneur* and those of the poet and the traveller. The associations with Thomas De Quincey's 1821 *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* connect the *flâneur*'s perambulations to opium reveries, wandering thoughts, mental rambles and contortions, hence reinforcing the link with the figure of the artist.

By 1831, the *flâneur* is only tentatively associated with the artist who collects impressions of the city. In 1841, he is more explicitly the exegete of the city and a producer of text. In 1831, the *flâneur* is a conspicuous modern type who has the power to decipher the cryptic modern city, but nowhere does he appear as an author or producer of text: he is a civil citizen who reports for duty.[122] In Boiste's 1836 definition, *flâneurs* are men of letters or

[120] Anon, 'Le Flâneur à Paris', 105. 'The slightest incident, a leaf falling to the ground, a pretty foot, a neat waist which he does not want to lose sight of, will guide his footsteps.'

[121] Anon, 'Le Flâneur à Paris', 101-102. 'Moreover, observe how slowly he walks, how he retraces his steps, how he is the only one to be where he is for the sole purpose of being there, when all others are there to go elsewhere. He is surrounded by people who, all day, seem to be attempting to catch up on the quarter of an hour they lost in the morning. He enjoys the pleasure of breathing, observing, and being calm in the middle of this feverish agitation – in one word, he enjoys living. He is like the Turk who, sitting in the cemetery of Constantinople, is enraptured by the inhalations of opium, the plumes of smoke rising from his lips and the perfumes of the breeze coming from the shores of Asia.'

[122] Anon, 'Le Flâneur à Paris', 108. 'Le flâneur connaît et pratique ses devoirs. Il n'a pas atteint l'âge heureux, il n'a pas une de ces fonctions désirables, qui vous classent dans la réserve de la garde nationale il endosse l'uniforme en soupirant; il gagne, à pas comptés, le lieu de ralliement.' 'The *flâneur* knows his duties, and

artists.[123] By 1841, Lacroix links *flânerie* to art and literature with increasing insistence: 'Les arts, les sciences, la littérature doivent plus ou moins leurs progrès journaliers au flâneur. […] Mais c'est surtout la littérature qui possède l'élite de la flânerie. Les noms ici se pressent sous ma plume. La flânerie est le caractère distinctif du véritable homme de lettres.'[124] He alludes to Balzac, whom he sees as a writer and thinker because he is a *flâneur*. 'Je voudrais bien qu'il me fût permis de demander sans indiscrétion à l'ingénieux auteur de la *Physiologie du Mariage* à quelles sources il a puisé cette profonde connaissance des plus inexplicables mystères de la nature féminine.'[125]

In Lacroix's physiology, the *flâneur* is described as a philosopher who possesses the synthetic power of the glance, and yet who is not burdened by knowledge: 'philosophes *sans le savoir*, qui semblent exercer d'instinct la faculté de tout saisir d'un coup d'œil et d'analyser en passant.'[126] He concludes with a statement in which he describes himself as a *flâneur*: 'Qui êtes-vous enfin, vous qui lisez ces lignes? Et qui suis-je moi qui les écris? Un flâneur.'[127] This final gesture of identification of the *flâneur* with the writer in the popular press of the period signals yet another shift in the representation of this protean figure. The bringing together of the figure of the *flâneur* and that of the writer is confirmed in later Paris anthologies. In *Le Diable à Paris*, the editor uses his literary alter ego, the devil Flammèche, to explain that he is collecting the essays of the likes of Honoré de Balzac and George Sand for his Parisian anthology. In the preface, Flammèche explicitly requires the help of celebrated writers or *hommes de lettres* to observe and write about Paris from different vantage points. In other words, the preface shows us the figure of the editor in the process of recruiting *flâneurs*.[128]

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performs them. He has not reached the happy age which give the desirable functions which put him in the reserves of the National Guard. He puts on his uniform with a sigh; he makes his way to the rallying point with a heavy heart.'

[123] Boiste, *Dictionnaire de la conversation et de la lecture*, 1836, 197. 'En général, les gens de lettres, les artistes, sont flâneurs: c'est pour eux un moyen de faire reposer la pensée au profit de l'observation.' 'In general, men of letters and artists are *flâneurs*: *flânerie* lets them observe what is around them and rest their thoughts.'

[124] Lacroix, 'Le Flâneur', 68. 'Arts, sciences and literature owe their daily progress to the *flâneur*. […] But it is mainly literature which has the elite of *flânerie*. Names would roll off my pen here. *Flânerie* is the distinctive trait of the true man of letters.'

[125] Lacroix, 'Le Flâneur', 69. 'I would like to be allowed to ask the ingenious author of the *Physiologie du Mariage* where he drew this detailed knowledge of the most inexplicable mysteries of the feminine condition.'

[126] Lacroix, 'Le Flâneur', 65. [*Flâneurs* are] philosophers without being aware of it, and are instinctively able to seize and analyse everything in a sweeping glance.'

[127] Lacroix, 'Le Flâneur', 72. ''Who are you, then, you who are reading these lines? And who am I, who is writing them? A *flâneur*.'

[128] Pierre-Jules Hetzel (ed.), *Le Diable à Paris: Paris et les parisiens: mœurs et coutumes, caractères et portraits des habitants de Paris, tableau complet de leur vie Le Diable à Paris*, 2 vols (Paris: P.-J. Hetzel, 1845-1846), 26. 'Ne puis-je demander à chacun d'eux un de ces services qu'entre Diables et hommes de lettres on ne saurait

Balzac is a writer who greatly contributed to the transition of the *flâneur* from the popular physiologies and *tableaux* to the consecrated ground of literature. Balzac not only introduced numerous *flâneurs* in his novels, he was a great walker and often identified himself with the *flâneur*. In his text on urban observation in Paris, Fournel explicitly identifies Balzac with the *flâneur*:

> C'est en flânant dans Paris que Balzac a fait tant de précieuses trouvailles, entendu tant de mots, déterré tant de types. C'est un peu en flânant sur l'Océan que Christophe Colomb a découvert l'Amérique. Il reste bien des Amériques nouvelles à découvrir, en flânant à sa manière dans certains domaines encore inexplorés de l'Océan parisien.[129]

Balzac's *flâneur* sometimes occupies the position of Balzac the writer himself who positions himself as a detached observer of everyday life, 'the wise and curious genius that sees and takes note of everything.'[130] However, Balzac also undermines the seemingly commanding gaze of this *flâneur*, since as we shall see in the following chapter, 'his characters with superior power of observation and penetrating vision are all subjected to a humbling irony,'[131] which points to a form of alienation.[132] The *flâneur*'s gaze in Balzac often points to the complexity of seeing, and is often equated with 'yearning and separation, desire and alienation.'[133] However, at other times, Balzac's *flâneur* is endowed with powers of empathy which are characteristic of the *flâneur* of the physiologies and are also reminiscent of the writer's own methods, as is the case in *Facino Cane*:

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refuser, c'est-à-dire un peu ou beaucoup d'aide ?' 'Can I not ask each of them for help, which is the custom between devils and men of letters?'

[129] Fournel, *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris*, 261-2. 'It is through *flânerie* that Balzac made so many precious discoveries, heard so many words and unearthed so many types. It is through a form of *flânerie* on the ocean that Christopher Columbus discovered America. There are still many Americas to be discovered by flâneuring in one's own way through some of the unchartered waters of the Parisian Ocean.'

[130] Balzac, Préface de *La Peau de chagrin*, in in Pierre-Georges Castex (ed.), *La Comédie humaine*, 12 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Collection 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade', 1976-1981), vol. 10 [1979], 53. 'Beaucoup d'hommes distingués sont doués du talent d'observer, sans posséder celui de donner une forme vivante à leurs pensées; comme d'autres écrivains ont été doués d'un style merveilleux, sans être guidés par ce génie sagace et curieux qui voit et enregistre toute chose. De ces deux dispositions intellectuelles résultent, en quelque sorte, une vue et un toucher littéraire.' 'Many distinguished men possess the gift of observation, but don't have the ability to express their ideas in a lively way. Other writers have been endowed with a marvellous style, without being guided by the wise and curious genius that sees and takes note of everything. From these two intellectual dispositions come in some way the literary senses of sight and touch.' (Helen Constantine (trans.) and Patrick Coleman (ed.), *The Wild Ass's Skin*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 228.)

[131] John Rignall, *Realist Fiction and the Strolling Spectator* (London, New York: Routledge, 1992), 38.

[132] For more details on the alienated gaze of the *flâneur* in Balzac's fiction, see John Rignall's chapter entitled 'Balzac: the alienated gaze' in *Realist Fiction and the Strolling Spectator*.

[133] Rignall, *Realist Fiction and the Strolling Spectator*, 43.

> J'allais observer les mœurs du faubourg, ses habitants et leurs caractères. Aussi mal vêtu que les ouvriers, indifférent au décorum, je pouvais me mêler à leurs groupes, les voir concluant des marchés, et se disputant à l'heure où ils quittent le travail. Chez moi l'observation était déjà devenue intuitive, elle pénétrait l'âme sans négliger le corps; ou plutôt elle saisissait si bien les détails extérieurs, qu'elle allait sur-le-champ au-delà; elle me donnait la faculté de vivre la vie de l'individu sur laquelle elle s'exerçait, en me permettant de me substituer à lui comme le derviche des Mille et Une Nuits prenait le corps et l'âme des personnes sur lesquelles il prononçait certaines paroles.[134]

In this extract, the *flâneur* is endowed with the quasi-magical power to merge with the crowd body and soul, and indirectly to Balzac's own power of empathy and imaginative gifts as a novelist. However, this passage is followed by uneasy interrogations about the nature of this vision: 'Quitter ses habitudes, devenir un autre que soi par l'ivresse des facultés morales, et jouer ce jeu à volonté, telle était ma distraction. À quoi dois-je ce don? Est-ce une seconde vue? Est-ce une de ces qualités dont l'abus mènerait à la folie?'[135] This passage underlines the anxiety that surrounds the writer's 'gift' of vision. The *flâneur*'s vision is never unequivocal in Balzac's work. The figure of the *flâneur* in Balzac has been studied extensively by Pierre Loubier, who observed that the Balzacian *flâneur* is intrinsically polymorphous:

> Les multiples visages qu'il [le flâneur] prend dans La Comédie humaine le dotent d'une existence plurielle – polymorphe et polysémique – telle que la figure nous semble parfois étrangement contradictoire et fuyante. Ce caractère flottant […] serait ainsi le premier et principal effet de sens dégagé par la figure du Flâneur.[136]

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[134] Balzac, *Facino Cane* in *La Comédie humaine*, vol. 6 [1977], 1019. 'I used to watch the manners and customs of the Faubourg, its inhabitants, and their characteristics. As I dressed no better than a working man, and cared nothing for appearances, I did not put them on their guard; I could join a group and look on while they drove bargains or wrangled among themselves on their way home from work. Even then observation had come to be an instinct with me; a faculty of penetrating to the soul without neglecting the body; or rather, a power of grasping external details so thoroughly that they never detained me for a moment, and at once I passed beyond and through them. I could enter into the life of the human creatures whom I watched, just as the dervish in the *Arabian Nights* could pass into any soul or body after pronouncing a certain formula.' (*Facino Cane*, trans. Clara Bell, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1737/1737.txt> [accessed 02/02/2011])

[135] Balzac, *Facino Cane* in *La Comédie humaine*, vol. 6 [1977], 1020. 'To come out of my own ways of life, to be another than myself through a kind of intoxication of the intellectual faculties, and to play this game at will, such was my recreation. Whence comes the gift? Is it a kind of second sight? Is it one of those powers which when abused end in madness?' (*Facino Cane*, trans. Clara Bell, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1737/1737.txt> [accessed 02/02/2011])

[136] Pierre Loubier, 'Balzac et le flâneur', *L'Année balzacienne*, 3ème série, n° 2 (2001), 141-166, p.142. 'The many faces which the *flâneur* adopts in *The Human Comedy* give him plural identities – or an identity which is polymorphous and polysemous – so much so that the figure sometimes appears to us as contradictory and elusive. This fluctuating, variable nature is the principal impression which the figure of the *flâneur* produces.'

This fluctuating, changeable identity, I argue, is not a trait which is specific to the Balzacian *flâneur*, but one which characterizes the *flâneur* and ensures the persistence of the figure throughout the nineteenth century and beyond.

Thus, the figure of the *flâneur* is disseminated in the texts and images of the popular physiologies, but he progressively assumes a higher literary stand as writers such as George Sand and Honoré de Balzac start publishing short pieces in anthologies in which he figures centrally. Eventually, as more texts about or written by *flâneurs* begin to appear, the *flâneur* moves gradually into the realm of literature. This is another paradoxical trait of the *flâneur*, who is poised between the lowbrow physiologies and the higher ground of literature.

4. The *flâneur* as a product of print culture?

On a different level, one might add that these numerous shifts and paradoxes in the perception of the *flâneur* might be due to the conditions of production of the physiologies and seriality itself, or what Sainte-Beuve famously called 'La Littérature industrielle.'[137] The proliferation of physiologies in the 1830s and 1840s encouraged them to refer to each other and interact between themselves, leading them to a high level of intertextuality. What Sainte-Beuve calls their 'industrial' nature thus turned physiologies into an ever-renewing space of redefinition, but simultaneously transformed them into uniform and standardized spaces. As Sieburth points out, 'quickly produced and marketed, consumed and discarded, only to be repurchased under a slightly different title, the physiologies […] are early instances of the cheap, throwaway 'instant book' whose appeal lies in its very topicality and ephemerality.'[138] Valérie Stiénon explained how these physiologies were collected and re-used by astute editors:

> Les libraires Aubert et Desloges se sont montrés particulièrement habiles à standardiser la formule physiologique pour faire recette en la récupérant sous forme de collections, dont celle des "Physiologies-Aubert." Ces textes restent confinés dans leurs réseaux de production et attachés aux moyens spécifiques de leur élaboration et de leur vente: libraires en concurrence commerciale, auteurs issus des milieux journalistiques, collections et formules éditoriales recyclant des

[137] Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, 'La littérature industrielle', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1er septembre 1839.
[138] Sieburth, 'Same Difference: The French Physiologies, 1840–1842', 167.

> articles et des parties de volumes déjà parus, procédés publicitaires d'annonces de titres à paraître, etc. Elles connaissent une grande diffusion, étant parfois vendues dans les échoppes, monnayées comme des tracts dans la rue ou distribuées dans les bals publics.[139]

These conditions of production and circulation could not but impact on the content of the physiologies and encourage these echoes and distorted reflections between them. Stiénon also points out that before launching into the production of physiologies, those editors specialised in the production of volumes regrouping prints and lithographs which were modelled on the English Keepsake.[140] Keepsakes were small volumes of collected verse, prose, and illustrations, which appeared 'annually from 1828 to 1857 during the Christmas season as gifts, for middle-class women.'[141] There are interesting parallels between the keepsakes and physiologies, and one might suggest that the editing techniques used by French editors might have taken their inspiration from those of English editors. Keepsakes, like physiologies, were based on associations between texts and images, used modern steel-plate engraving techniques, were published in different forms (different sizes), and their editors sought out famous contributors.[142] Thus, editing strategies themselves travelled between London and Paris and contributed to making these physiologies into a meta-system which constantly referred to itself and evolved, as was seen in the earlier-mentioned case of the *flâneur*.

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[139] Valérie Stiénon, 'La consécration à l'envers', CONTEXTES, n°7 (mai 2010), 3. < http://contextes.revues.org/4654> [accessed 03/05/2012]. 'The booksellers Aubert and Desloges were extremely clever in the way they standardized the physiologies' conventions to bring in money by reusing them in serial collections. Amongst them were the 'Physiologies-Aubert.' These texts remained confined to their networks of distribution and tied to the specific way they were produced and sold: there were booksellers who were in direct commercial competition, authors who came from the same journalistic background, collections and editorial formulas which recycled articles and parts of volumes which had already been issued, advertising methods which announced the forthcoming titles, etc. These physiologies were widely disseminated, being sometimes sold in shops, hawked like tracts in the streets or handed out during public balls.'

[140] Stiénon, 'La consécration à l'envers', 3. 'Ils procèdent en effet de stratégies éditoriales émanant de quelques libraires-éditeurs parisiens spécialisés dans l'édition de périodiques satiriques illustrés et dans le volume d'estampes et de lithographies dérivé du livre romantique illustré et du keepsake anglais, comme il s'en vend alors bon nombre.' 'They derive from editorial strategies which are used by a few parisian editors and booksellers who specialize in editing illustrated satirical journals and volumes of prints and lithographs. They take their inspiration from romantic illustrated books and English keepsakes, which sell in great numbers at the time.'

[141] Kathryn Ledbetter, '"White Vellum and Gilt Edges": Imaging the Keepsake', *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 30.1 (Spring 1997), 35-47, (p.35).

[142] Ledbetter, '"White Vellum and Gilt Edges": Imaging the Keepsake', 35. 'Charles Heath and Frederic Mansel Reynolds set out early in 1828 on an editorial tour to enlist celebrated authors as editors or contributors to the 1829 volume. Courting them like royalty, Heath pursued Thomas Moore, Walter Scott, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, and Robert Southey with high fees that would make participation in *The Keepsake* irresistible.'

Seriality also affected the physiologies' relations with literature. On the one hand, many great literary authors wrote in those anthologies: Alphonse de Lamartine, Alexandre Dumas, Chateaubriand, and Sainte-Beuve himself contributed to *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un*. On the other hand, the physiologies' associations with the popular press excluded them from the field of the *belles-lettres*. Valérie Stéinon explained that the ambivalent status of the physiologies was intricately linked to their conditions of production and distribution:

> Le genre rassemble des textes produits et diffusés à Paris, précisément là où se conçoivent et se jouent les valeurs littéraires, à ceci près cependant qu'ils investissent des circuits de diffusion spécifiques et parallèles. […] Leurs conditions de production et leur statut parisien placent ces Physiologies dans une situation de cumul d'une centralité culturelle et géographique et d'une marginalité esthétique.[143]

Thus, these conditions of production contributed to undermining the literary values of physiologies while paradoxically blurring the line between literature and physiologies. The *flâneur* reflects these paradoxes in his very make-up, since he stemmed from the commercial world of print culture but as the century progressed, became more and more closely associated with the figure of the literary writer.

The *flâneur* is thus a paradoxical, hybrid figure who eludes definition by constantly morphing into different shapes. Physiologies make him into a 'type' and yet fail to pin him down since his main characteristic seems to be this undefinable nature. They define him as typically Parisian but his gaze must be that of a foreigner and the London heritage of peripatetic observation figures heavily in his make-up. He is a figure who comes to visibility by being constantly observed and caricatured but this is rapidly reversed and the *flâneur* becomes the most emblematic of urban observers. Finally, his cross-Channel origins and his move from popular print culture to literature testify to his adaptable nature and also make him a suitable candidate for being picked up and transferred to different contexts and cities.

[143] Stiénon, 'La consécration à l'envers', 3. 'This genre brings together texts which have been produced and disseminated in Paris, where literary values are devised and played out, except that they use specific, parallel distribution networks. […] Their conditions of production and their Parisian status put the physiologies in a situation which combines their cultural and geographical centrality to their aesthetic marginality.'

Chapter 2. Watching over the City: From Asmodeus to the *Flâneur*

Up with Icarus or Down with Theseus?

Chapter 1 has analysed the reasons for the *flâneur*'s lasting omnipresence on both sides of the Channel. The present chapter explores the idea that the *flâneur*'s enduring ubiquity is due to the fact that he offers us a perspective from which we can *view* and comprehend the city. This section will investigate the *flâneur*'s different modes of gazing. The positioning of the *flâneur* as an observer within the city is ambiguous, and it is difficult to know whether he occupies a transcendental position within urban modernity, or whether he challenges that dominant position. To examine this puzzling paradox, I will study the parallels and differences between the *flâneur* and the omniscient devil Asmodeus, an earlier literary figure whose gaze pervaded urban writing from the eighteenth-century onwards.

In 'Marches dans la Ville,' Michel de Certeau establishes a useful opposition between two modes of apprehending the city. On the one hand, the all-encompassing aerial viewpoint of the map-makers and city planners renders the city legible and comprehensible, and might be compared to Asmodeus's all-seeing, all-knowing gaze:

> [En hauteur], l'agitation [de la ville] est arrêtée, un moment, par la vision. La masse gigantesque s'immobilise sous les yeux. Elle se mue en texturologie où coïncident les extrêmes. […] Celui qui monte là-haut sort de la masse qui emporte et brasse en elle-même toute identité d'auteurs ou de spectateurs. Icare au-dessus de ces eaux, il peut ignorer les ruses de Dédale en des labyrinthes mobiles et sans fin. Son élévation le transfigure en voyeur. Elle le met à distance, elle mue en texte qu'on a devant soi, sous les yeux, le monde qui ensorcelait et dont on était "possédé." Elle permet de lire, d'être un Œil solaire, un regard de dieu. Exaltation d'une pulsion scopique et gnostique. N'être que ce point voyant, c'est la fiction du savoir.[1]

[1] Michel de Certeau, 'Marches dans la ville,' in *L'Invention du quotidien; arts de faire 1* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 139-140. '[From high up the agitation of the city] is momentarily arrested by vision. The gigantic mass is immobilized before the eyes. It is transformed into a texturology in which extremes coincide. […] When one

In terms of representation, this type of gaze is in line with Renaissance perspective. It gives us a clear, all-encompassing God's-eye view of the cityscape. On the other hand, the walker's or *flâneur*'s perception of space at ground-level inevitably remains illegible and mysterious and has to be apprehended through a rhetoric of walking:

> C'est 'en bas' au contraire (down), à partir des seuils où cesse la visibilité, que vivent les pratiquants ordinaires de la ville. Forme élémentaire de cette expérience, ils sont des marcheurs, *Wandersmänner*, dont le corps obéit aux pleins et aux déliés d'un 'texte' urbain qu'ils écrivent sans pouvoir le lire. […] Tout se passe comme si un aveuglement caractérisait les pratiques organisatrices de la ville habitée. Les réseaux de ces écritures avançantes et croisées composent une histoire multiple, sans auteur ni spectateur, formée en fragments de trajectoires et en altérations d'espaces: par rapport aux représentations, elle reste quotidiennement, indéfiniment, autre.[2]

For De Certeau, at street-level, the city is always experienced as chaotic, partial and fragmented. The pedestrians on the streets 'down below' try to read the city as a text, but crucially, they also write it. They do not have a single map of the city but a series of 'migrational metaphors' for it, which change as they actually walk. Walking through the streets is seen as a form of creation and subversion. The walker's perspective breaks away from the Renaissance system of perspective because 'it has social and bodily implications' and signals a shift in the way reality is apprehended. This new way of seeing is based on the idea of 'off-centeredness, discontinuity, serality, ordinariness and randomness.'[3] This

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goes up there, he leaves behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators. An Icarus flying above these waters, he can ignore the devices of Deadalus in mobile and endless labyrinths far below. His elevation transfigures him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a God. The exaltation of a scopic and Gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more.' (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, vol. 1, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 91-92.)

[2] De Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien*, 141-142. 'The ordinary practitioners of the city live "down below," below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk—-an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, Wändersmanner, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of the urban "text" they write without being able to read it. […] It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness. The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representation, it remains daily and indefinitely other. (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, 93).

[3] Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues, *Propos sur la flânerie* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2009), 5-6. 'La perspective a été l'appareil structurant des temps modernes, de la Renaissance à la fin du XIXè siècle. […] La flânerie [a] une dimension sociale aussi bien que corporelle [… et incarne] un mode de sensibilité nouveau. [… La flânerie] est un concept de la modernité rompant avec l'idéal de la perspective hérité de la Renaissance parce qu'elle est fondée sur le décentrement, la discontinuité, la sérialité d'une part, et d'autre part, sur la montée en puissance du quelconque, de la rencontre insolite ou insoutenable, en accord avec la déambulation urbaine.' 'Perspective was

opposition, which I have schematized for the sake of clarity, will be the starting point of my study. I shall then go on to demonstrate how the distinctions between Asmodeus and the *flâneur*, along with their distinct types of gazing, progressively collapsed during the first half of the nineteenth century.

The chapter will first dwell on the significance of Asmodeus as a symbolic figure. Lesage's 1707 *Le Diable boiteux* brought about the golden age of this literary devil, which lasted throughout the eighteenth century. Although Amsodeus remained part of the collective imagination, his gaze became somewhat eclipsed in the nineteenth century. However, this seems to be only part of the story. First, I shall argue that the Asmodean gaze did not disappear as much as it *changed* in nature. Secondly, I will demonstrate that, despite the waning physical presence of Asmodeus during the first half of the century, residual traces of the Asmodean gaze remained and persisted in the *flâneur*'s makeup. Indeed, physiologies, although ostensibly rejecting the panoptic gaze of Asmodeus to privilege that of the *flâneur*, actually combined both types of gazing in their depictions of the *flâneur*. Finally, I shall argue that considering Asmodeus alongside the *flâneur* illustrates the point that the *flâneur* might be the symbolic embodiment of Walter Benjamin's 'dialectical image.' The composite nature of the *flâneur* who combines the traits of a polymorphous devil with that of the urban walker reinforces the argument that the *flâneur* was a profoundly Protean figure from the very moment it came into being. The last section of this chapter will examine the Dickensian gaze in relation to that of Asmodeus and the *flâneur*. Dickens's writing provides an example of literary cross-pollination between Paris and London which contributed to increasing the flexibility and hybridity of the flâneurial gaze.

I. Asmodeus or the satirical gaze

the structuring apparatus of modern times, from the Renaissance until the end of the nineteenth century. *Flânerie* has social and bodily implications, and embodies a new form of sensibility. *Flânerie* is a concept which belongs to modernity and breaks away from Renaissance perspective because it is based on off-centeredness, discontinuity and seriality, as well as on unremarkableness and the random or unbearable encounters which go hand in hand with urban strolling.'

Asmodeus first appeared on the Parisian literary scene in 1707 in Alain René Lesage's *Le Diable boiteux*.[4] In this tale, Asmodeus takes the nobleman Don Cleofas on a night-time flight over Madrid as a reward for having released him from a glass phial. Perched on top of churches, this literary devil had the power to lift the rooftops of the city and peer into the life of his contemporaries: 'Je vais par mon pouvoir diabolique enlever les toits des Maisons, & malgré les ténèbres de la nuit, le dedans va se découvrir à vos yeux. À ces mots, il ne fit simplement qu'étendre le bras droit, et aussitôt tous les toits disparurent.'[5] A modern-time Argus Panoptes – the one-hundred-eyed giant in Greek mythology – Asmodeus's position and powers meant that he could grasp the city from above in a single glance. The cityscape offered itself up as a spectacle, 'a confusion of objects' delightful to its beholder. Asmodeus embodied the fantasy of unobtrusive omniscience: he possessed all-encompassing knowledge, unlimited mobility which transcended the boundaries of time, space and physical being, and Protean powers which meant he could adopt multiple identities.

One might see Asmodeus as a satiric device which Lesage used to criticise society by exposing its hypocrisies. First, the fact that Lesage chooses to endow a devil with totalizing visual powers calls attention to his satirical intent. Traditionally, the devil is associated with blurred vision, confusion and delusion. In the medieval period, he was believed to have the power to destabilize our faith in the most trusted of senses, that of sight:

> [The devil had] the power to adopt any bodily form or shape whatever, the power to create exact simulations of people and events, and, above all, the power to disrupt the cognitive process itself by physically entering either brain or eye or both and moving images around them at will. In effect, the devil could control and subvert each of the stages of Aristotelian cognition – manipulating the world of perceived objects, tampering with the medium through which visual *species* travelled, and altering the workings of both the external and internal senses.[6]

Lesage ironically reverses this trope by making Asmodeus a stable and truthful agent of vision, and by making his readers rely on the devil for accurate vision. Moreover, the choice of a devil's-eye view of the cityscape, which reverses the traditional God's-eye view of the

[4] Alain René Lesage, *Le Diable boiteux* (Paris: Veuve Barbin, 1707).
[5] Lesage, *Le Diable boiteux*, 21. 'With my diabolical powers, I shall remove all rooftops and despite the obscurity of night, you shall see inside each house. With these words, he reached his arm out, and all the rooftops immediately vanished.'
[6] Stuart, Clark, *Vanities of the Eye* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 3.

world, immediately foregrounds the satirical tone of the text as well as the intent to inspect and see through social conventions. With him, Lesage takes up the tradition of the distanced satirical overview which goes all the way back to antiquity, from Lucian of Samosata's *Icaromenippus or The Sky-man*,[7] to Luis Vélez de Guevara's 1641 story *El Diablo cojuelo* or *The Lame Devil*, which he heavily draws on and explicitly quotes in his preface. Asmodeus, having thus travelled through the ages, is associated with temporal as well as spatial distance and distancing.

The realm of satire to which Asmodeus belongs is characterized by 'the employment of sarcasm, irony, ridicule, etc. in exposing, denouncing, deriding, or ridiculing vice, folly, indecorum, abuses, or evils of any kind.'[8] The satirical gaze was a quintessential part of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *philosophie des Lumières*. Diminution, exaggeration, juxtaposition and irony are some of the literary devices most commonly used by satirists to ridicule and criticize contemporary society. The distanced Asmodean gaze takes up and performs these processes. Distance is necessary for the ironic or satirical gaze to function. The ironic stance involves a shift of perspective, a withdrawal, a gap, which is also part and parcel of the workings of satire. Distance is maieutical, in that it necessarily elicits questioning and knowledge. Distance helps us to 'become fully conscious of ideas previously latent in the mind,'[9] which is why it is also associated to the gaze and reasoning of philosophers:

> L'œil du philosophe semble assister au passage de l'être comme le Dieu chrétien, instance spéculaire, 'comparaît temporellement devant lui-même.' Il faut que ce regard transcende ou surmonte son propre passage pour en recueillir la vérité, à la fois à chaque moment, à chaque époque, mais aussi finalement, une fois pour toutes. Pour sauver ce qui passe, l'œil de l'esprit, ou le regard philosophique, doit devenir lui-même un œil absolu capable de voir son propre passage, à la fois engagé dans le temps et rassemblant le temps, à la fois passant et ne passant pas.[10]

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[7] Jacques Berchtold, *Les Prisons du roman (XVIIe - XVIIIe siècle)*, (Genève: Droz, 2000), 518.
[8] 'satire, *n*.' OED.
[9] 'maieutic, *adj*. Relating to or designating the Socratic process, or other similar method, of assisting a person to become fully conscious of ideas previously latent in the mind.' OED.
[10] Sylviane Agacinski, *Le Passeur de temps, modernité et nostalgie* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), 30. 'The philosopher's eye seems to witness the passage of being just as the Christian God, this specular authority, appears to himself in time. This gaze must transcend or overcome its own "passing" to record its truth, at every single moment, at every epoch, but also once and for all. To save what passes away, the eye of the mind or philosophical gaze must itself become an all-seeing eye which is able to see its own passage through time, both from within and from the outside, both passing and not passing.'

Distance is at the heart of the Asmodean gaze and underpins the workings of satire as well as those of philosophy. Lesage's text is indeed underlain by an instructive purpose which belongs to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The devil is intent on teaching Cleofas how to see and think clearly:

> Cette confusion d'objets que vous regardez avec plaisir […] n'est qu'un amusement frivole. Il faut que le vous le rende utile; et, pour vous donner une parfaite connaissance de la vie humaine, je veux vous expliquer ce que font toutes ces personnes que vous voyez. Je vais vous découvrir les motifs de leurs actions, et vous révéler jusqu'à leurs plus secrètes pensées.[11]

The satirical vein of Lesage's text is emphasized by the ironic subversion of folktale and supernatural motifs: the rebellion of the angels from the *Book of Tobit*[12] becomes a common fight 'in the regions of mid-air' in Lesage's version. By using the figure of a devil, Lesage parodies superstitions as well as classical literature. Asmodeus, the demon of lust, is the double of Cupid, the true face of the delightful yet deceitful image poets have created for us: 'vous voyez le charmant dieu des amours, ce souverain maître des cœurs. Que vous semble de mon air et de ma beauté? Les poètes ne sont- ils pas d'excellents peintres?'[13] This illusion is corrected by Don Cleofas, who looks with astonishment on 'the figure of a man in a cloak, about two feet six inches high, and supported by two crutches.'[14] Asmodeus is a literary figure associated with unveiling, exposing and divulging firmly rooted in the eighteenth-century tradition. The lame devil's distanced gaze is the instrument which allows us to comprehend the true measure of man and of his city.

The tale's success was such that the lame devil's literary presence persisted well into the nineteenth century. He appears repeatedly in the prefaces of Parisian anthologies and physiologies. However, I shall argue that the presence of Asmodeus in these prefaces testifies to a shift in his symbolic role during that period.

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[11] Lesage, *Le Diable boiteux*, 21. 'This confusion of objects which you delight in beholding […] is no frivolous amusement. I must make it useful to you. To give you a perfect knowledge of the human heart, I will explain in what all these persons that you see are engaged. All shall be open to you; I will discover the hidden motives of their deeds, and reveal to you their most secret thoughts.'

[12] 'This Book of the Apocrypha was written in Aramaic or Hebrew, probably c.200 BC.' < http://www.oxfordreference.com> [accessed 10/08/2013]

[13] Lesage, *Le Diable boiteux*, 14. 'You behold the charming god of love, that sovereign master of the human heart. What think you of my air and beauty? Confess that the poets are excellent painters.'

[14] Lesage, *Le Diable boiteux*, 11. 'La figure d'homme en manteau, de la hauteur d'environ deux pieds et demi, appuyé sur deux béquilles.'

In 1831, the preface to the first volume of *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un* set Asmodeus as the symbolic figurehead of the collection, a clear homage to Lesage. However, I would like to suggest that the nature of the Asmodean gaze changed radically between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Walter Benjamin noted that the profusion of physiologies which flourished during the July Monarchy effectively brought about the disappearance of the satirical watch over the capital.

> From the itinerant street vendor of the boulevards to the dandy in the foyer of the opera-house, there was not a figure of Paris life that was not sketched by a *physiologue*. [… After 1848] the genre declined, and it disappeared together with the reign of the citizen-king Louis-Philippe. It was a basically petty-bourgeois genre. […] The beginning of the physiologies coincided with the so-called September Laws, the tightened censorship of 1836. These laws summarily forced a team of able artists with a background in satire out of politics (CB, 35-36).

There is a move away from satire in the physiologies of the 1830s and 1840s. Producing these 'catalogues' of physiologies and repeatedly portraying innocuous types contributed to obfuscating some aspects of the city, like the functioning of the *polis*. Physiologies, in a way, created a depoliticized space full of types which were ready to be consumed. Within this type of discourse, the lame devil is thus effectively emptied of its satirical potential. Moreover, Amsodeus, formerly the central narrative authority through whose eyes readers could apprehend the city, is moved to the margins of the text. He often only appears in the prefaces of physiologies, that is, in the paratext or peritext. Gérard Genette's definition of the paratext is helpful in understanding the function and role of Asmodeus in these anthologies:

> Plus que d'une limite ou d'une frontière étanche, il s'agit ici d'un seuil, ou — mot de Borges à propos d'une préface — d'un 'vestibule' qui offre à tout un chacun la possibilité d'entrer, ou de rebrousser chemin: 'zone indécise' entre le dedans et le dehors, elle-même sans limite rigoureuse, ni vers l'intérieur (le texte) ni vers l'extérieur (le discours du monde sur le texte) lisière, ou, comme disait Philippe Lejeune, 'frange du texte imprimé qui, en réalité, commande toute la lecture.' Cette frange, en effet, toujours porteuse d'un commentaire auctorial, ou plus ou moins légitimée par l'auteur, constitue, entre texte et hors-texte, une zone non seulement de transition, mais de transaction: lieu privilégié d'une pragmatique et d'une stratégie, d'une action sur le public au service, bien ou mal compris et

> accompli, d'un meilleur accueil du texte et d'une lecture plus pertinente – plus pertinente s'entend aux yeux de l'auteur et de ses alliés.[15]

The prefaces of the physiologies frame and guide our interpretation of them. Asmodeus's position in these prefaces has a very specific function – it affiliates the physiologies to Lesage's successful tale. Yet, Asmodeus's displacement to the threshold of the text also hints at the gradual eclipse of the Asmodean mode of gazing over the city. Indeed, as the century progresses, Asmodeus becomes the repository of a tradition rather than an active satirical agent.

II. From Asmodeus to the *flâneur*

The fact that Asmodeus was systematically pushed to the margins of the 1830s and 1840s Parisian anthologies indicates that his satirical gaze over the city was beginning to recede, to become less central. Another, more striking symptom of this fading away was the arrival of a new literary figure – the *flâneur*. During the first half of the century, the *flâneur* and Asmodeus progressively became amalgamated, and the *flâneur* came to dominate the discourse of the physiologies.[16] However, residual traces of the Asmodean gaze remained in the *flâneur*'s makeup. Seeking to understand the relationship between the two figures illuminates the shift of paradigm in urban gazing which took place between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This new way of gazing at the city was not only linked to the rapid changes such as urbanisation, industrialization and commercialisation which took place in the

[15] Gérard Genette, *Seuils* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), 7-8. 'More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a threshold, or – a word Borges used apropos of a preface – a "vestibule" that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back. It is an "undefined zone" between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world's discourse about the text), an edge, or, as Philippe Lejeune put it, "a fringe of the printed text which in reality controls one's whole reading of the text." Indeed, this fringe, always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author, constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction: a privileged place of pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that – whether well or poorly understood and achieved – is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it.' (*Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), 1-2.)

[16] The critics who first drew my attention to the filiation between these two figures are Catherine Nesci and Jillian Taylor Lerner. Catherine Nesci, *Le Flâneur et les flâneuses: les femmes et la ville à l'époque romantique* (Grenoble: ELLUG, Bibliothèque stendhalienne et romantique, 2007), pp.56-60. Jillian Taylor Lerner, 'A Devil's-Eye View of Paris: Gavarni's Portrait of the Editor', *Oxford Art Journal*, 31, 2 (2008), 233-250.

city, it was also embedded within the print history and political history of that very specific period.

As was said earlier, the preface to *Paris ou le Livre des cent-et-un* indicates in a footnote that its prospective title was 'Le Diable boiteux' in direct reference to Lesage.[17] This preface is particularly interesting because it insists on rejecting the single panoptic viewpoint while paradoxically referring to the figure of the lame devil. This ambivalence suggests that the merging between the *flâneur* and the omniscient devil is clearly already under way here. I would suggest that Asmodeus's role changes significantly during this period: while his gaze *satirizes* in the eighteenth century, it *synthesises* during the following one. Asmodeus appears in the prefaces of nineteenth-century physiologies to give a panoramic survey of what is contained in these anthologies, but by then, has lost much of his satirical bite. The persistence of this type of omniscient, synthetic gaze might have to do with the century's keen interest in scientific objectivity and for the accumulation of data, statistics, facts and knowledge. Jillian Taylor Lerner has underlined the striking parallels between the figures of the lame devil and that of the editor who collects, compiles, and surveys the Parisian texts.[18] Asmodeus is an ideal metaphor for the all-encompassing scope of anthologies, which is why he is often likened to the figure of the editor: his ambition is both to lift the lid on myriad lives and to provide a synthetic overview of the anthologies' content.

The genesis of *Le Livre des cent-et-un* illustrates this point particularly well. The preface depicts its editor, Pierre-François Ladvocat, as the Asmodean presence without whom the project would never have materialized. *Le Livre des cent-et-un* originated in Ladvocat's impeding bankruptcy, which was prevented because one hundred and fifty nine writers contributed to his anthology of physiologies to save him from ruin. The novelty of his entreprise is underscored in the preface: 'Voici donc un livre neuf, s'il en fut jamais; neuf par la matière, neuf par la forme, neuf par le procédé de la composition qui en fait une espèce d'encyclopédie des idées contemporaines, le monument d'une jeune et brillante époque,

[17] Anon, 'Au public: le libraire-éditeur', in Camille Ladvocat (ed.), *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un*, 15 vols (Paris: Ladvocat, 1831-1834), vol. 1, iii. 'Ce livre fut précédemment annoncé sous le titre du Diable Boiteux à Paris, les auteurs ont décidé qu'il n'aurait d'autre titre que celui de PARIS OU LE LIVRE DES CENT-ET-UN.'

[18] Jillian Taylor Lerner has shown how physiologies of the period created a composite portrait of authorial expertise by blending the figures of the lame devil, the ragpicker and the editor. See Taylor Lerner, 'A Devil's-Eye View of Paris: Gavarni's Portrait of the Editor', 238.

l'album d'une littérature ingénieuse et puissante.'[19] Pierre-François Ladvocat was a very modern, audacious, and innovative editor. He owned a literary establishment at the Palais Royal which was the heart of the Parisian literary life between 1815 and 1830. He was an extremely generous patron to many Romantic writers and tirelessly worked to support and promote young writers, often at great financial risk to himself. He was constantly experimenting with new methods of editing. In 1830, as he was on the verge of ruin, numerous writers, whom he had helped and supported, joined forces and offered Ladvocat at least two texts each to publish a collection which was eventually entitled *Paris ou le Livre des cent-et-un*. For all this, he died a very poor man, and his unusual and epic life inspired the character of Dauriat in Balzac's *Les Illusions perdues*.[20] However, the writers who worked for Ladvocat underlined his significant role and explained the reason for their contribution in the preface to *Paris ou le Livre des cent-et-un*:

> Il ne nous reste qu'à parler de ce qui est "personnel" à l'éditeur M. Ladvocat, dans les circonstances qui ont donné naissance à cet ouvrage. Un dévouement consciencieux, et quinze ans consacrés aux devoirs de sa profession, ne l'auraient conduit qu'à sa ruine, si on le laissait succomber à la crise commerciale contre laquelle il lutte avec courage depuis longtemps; mais il en retirait un fruit qui peut être estimé à plus haut prix que la fortune, il avait du moins le bonheur d'acquérir dans sa carrière, comme libraire et comme éditeur, d'illustres patronages et d'honorables amitiés. Le manuscrit sur lequel se fonde maintenant l'avenir de son établissement, est le tribut spontané de l'intérêt que les écrivains les plus distingués de nos jours portent d'un accord unanime à une maison qui a été pour quelques-uns d'entre eux le point de départ du talent, et le berceau de la gloire.[21]

[19] Anonymous, 'Au public: le libraire-éditeur', in *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un*, vol. 1, ix. 'Here is a new book, if there ever was one. It is new in its subject matter and in the way it was composed and put together. It is a sort of encyclopaedia of contemporary ideas, the masterpiece of a young and brilliant generation, the album of an ingenious and powerful literature.'

[20] See Edmond Werdet, *De la librairie française. Son passé – son présent – son avenir, avec des notices biographiques* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1860), pp. 93; 95; 98–103; 108; 233; 315–8; 324.

[21] Anon, 'Au public: le libraire-éditeur', *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un*, vol. 1, x-xi. 'The only thing left for us to discuss is what is personal to Mr. Ladvocat in the circumstances which have propelled the writing of this collection. A conscientious devotion, and fifteen years dedicated to the duties of his profession, would only have led him to ruin, if one were to leave him to succumb to the commercial crisis against which he has long been bravely struggling. Yet, he has reaped a reward more weighty than fortune, for at least he had the good luck of acquiring, during his career as editor and bookseller, illustrious patronages and honourable friendships. The manuscript upon which the future of his business venture lies is the spontaneous tribute of the interest which today's most distinguished writers unanimously take in a publishing house which has been, for some, the starting point of talent and the cradle of glory.'

This excerpt clearly suggests that the genesis of this innovative edition is also specifically rooted in the material and commercial history of print in France at the time. Ladvocat's financial circumstances gave rise to the theoretical project which is exposed in the preface: 'Quel écrivain pourrait suffire à ce Paris multiplié et tricolore? […] Quel écrivain voudrait se charger de ce monstre?'[22] The text points to the inadequacy of a single writer to depict the multiplicity of Paris. One might also note the political and revolutionary echoes contained in this sentence. The July Monarchy was the heyday of eclectism and *juste milieu*, and promoted the sense that there was no one way in which French state or society could be understood. *Paris ou le Livre des cent-et-un* shifts the emphasis away from Asmodeus's single viewpoint and promotes the multiple gazes of numerous literary *flâneurs*, but it is important to note that this shift is also embedded in the French political context and in Parisian print history. One cannot help but note the parallels between the figures of Ladvocat, that of the editor of physiologies and that of Asmodeus, who all seem to die out in one way or another during the first half of the nineteenth century. The fashion for physiologies is a short-lived phenomenon which does not outlive the July Monarchy, Ladvocat himself passes away in 1854, and as I will go on to demonstrate, Asmodeus's physical presence progressively recedes to become absorbed into the makeup of the more modern *flâneur* or *flâneurs*, which shows the endless evolution of cultural characters and species into others.

This insistence on the need for a multiple, flâneurial gaze is significant on yet another level. Martina Lauster suggests that 'while eighteenth-century moralists were able to rely on their own satirical gaze to paint a sharp analytical portrait of society, those of the 1830s have to work together to depict a much wider social spectrum, and the key to understanding it is "synthesis."'[23] Lauster's remark is enlightening because it underlines the general shift which took place between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which moves away from the paradigm of the satirical gaze. Her sentence also begs the question of whether that is because the nature of society is itself understood differently. The eighteenth-century observer is allowed to rely on his own gaze, which is often understood to be impartial; by contrast, nineteenth-century viewers are all seen as particular and partisan perspectives which need to

[22] Anon, 'Au public: le libraire-éditeur', *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un*, vol. 1, vi. 'What writer would do for this multiplying and tri-coloured Paris? […] Which writer would take on this monster?'
[23] Martina Lauster, 'Physiognomy, Zoology, and Physiology', in Melissa Percival and Graeme Tyler (eds.), *Physiognomy in Profile, Lavater's impact on European Culture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 176.

be added together. Moreover, the eighteenth-century satirist is often concerned with society understood as the *beau monde* or the *tout Paris*; post-revolutionary *flâneurs*, on the other hand, have a more comprehensive and dense idea of the social organism. What is fascinating in the Parisian anthologies is that this multi-layered shift visibly manifests itself in the presence of Asmodeus as an editor and in the simultaneous convergence of the figure of the devil and that of the *flâneur*, which I am now going to elaborate.

III. The *Flâneur* as a polymorphous devil?

I will now sketch in more detail how nineteenth-century publications focusing on the description of Paris moved away from the eighteenth-century panoptic gaze of Asmodeus towards the amalgamated perspectives of the nineteenth-century *flâneur* who mixed with the urban crowd. This mode of apprehending the city is a much more immediate form of immersion in the city which appears to be poles apart from the Asmodean mode of gazing. However, I shall demonstrate that far from being diametrically opposed, these two types of vision actually interacted in complex ways during the nineteenth century. In fact, by the mid-century, the two figures had merged into the single figure of the *flâneur*. Being in large part a product of the new urban environment, the *flâneur* adapted to urban changes and lived on to survey the modern city.

For the contributors to *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un*, Asmodeus's imprisonment in a glass phial at the beginning of *Le Diable boiteux* exemplifies the symbolic stillness of the devil's panoptic gaze over the city. For them, Asmodeus's all-encompassing gaze alone was no longer adapted to the changing cityscape. A new method was required to explore and review modern Paris.

> Eh bien! donc, renoncez à l'unité pour une peinture multiple, appelez à votre secours toutes les imaginations contemporaines avec leurs coloris si divers: vive ou lente, joyeuse ou triste, bonne ou moqueuse, sceptique ou croyante, quelle que soit l'imagination de nos faiseurs, elle aura sa place dans ce livre, elle prendra un instant le manteau d'Asmodée, et elle ira partout, la pauvre fille, partout où peut aller un homme qui n'a peur de rien: à l'Opéra, à l'hôpital, au Palais-Royal, à

> Bicêtre, à la chambre des pairs et à la Maternité; dans le couvent qui tombe, dans le boudoir qui se dépouille de ses tentures roses, chez l'artiste qui vend son violon pour payer son dernier dîner; elle ira partout où il y a quelque chose qui meurt, pour porter secours à ce quelque chose, ou du moins pour pleurer sur ce pauvre rien qui s'en va.[24]

To the fixed and transcendental viewpoint ascribed to the devil by Lesage, these writers oppose the moving and multiple viewpoints of city strollers, which they promote as the best way to apprehend the city. In this description, the *flâneur* emerges as the figure who can make his way into every place and experience life with an intensity which was not available to Asmodeus. He is also in a privileged position to see and grasp what is fading fast or passing away. He can see the destructions and creations of the world – rather like Benjamin's Angel of History which sees all the rubble of civilisations. The preface effectively puts the *flâneur* at the forefront of urban exploration, while Asmodeus recedes into the background.

As the century progresses, then, the distinctions between both figures gradually break down and the figure of Asmodeus seems to merge and morph into that of the *flâneur*. Writers progressively endow the *flâneur* with the power to adopt both types of vision, and he becomes capable of both being immersed in the crowd and beholding it from a distance, thus bringing together the two positions described by De Certeau. There are many fascinating parallels and connections between the two figures during that period. Interestingly, one of the earliest instances of Asmodeus physically morphing into a *flâneur* can be found not in Paris, but in a London three-volume publication dating from 1808 entitled *Asmodeus; or, the Devil in London: A Sketch*:

> At that time, I was a little dwarfish fellow and moved upon crutches; but a covenant having been entered into by my enemy the magician, and the superior of the lower regions, it was decreed, that I should be compelled to wander, over the face of the earth, for the space of one hundred years, with the power of inhabiting

[24] Coll., 'Au public: le libraire-éditeur', in *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un*, vol. 1, vi-vii. The preface was signed by all the one hundred and fifty nine contributors to the first volume of the collection.) 'Forsake unity and favour instead a multiple *tableau*, and call to your aid all the imaginations of the age, with their different hues. The imagination of our makers, be it lively or slow, joyous or melancholy, benevolent or mocking, sceptical or pious, will find its place in the book. She [the imagination] will don Amsodeus's coat for an instant and – poor thing – will go everywhere a fearless man would go: to the Opera, to the hospital, to the Palais Royal, to Bicêtre, to the House of Lords and to the maternity ward; to the dilapidating convent, to the boudoir with fading pink hangings, to the artist's who is selling his violin to buy his last supper; she will go to all the places where something is dying, to help this something, or at least to lament the loss of this mere nothing which is passing away.'

> whatever mortal form I might chuse. […] In these metamorphoses, I have been, alternately, a philosopher and a libertine – a sage and a lunatic – a miser and a spendthrift – a peer and a pickpocket. […] I winged my way to England, where I have been an invisible spectator, at the different gaming tables of the metropolis, in search of a friend whose principles might assist me in my labours.[25]

In this passage, the author cleverly weaves his new London story into the canvas of Asmodeus's Spanish adventures with Don Cleofas Zambullo, thereby accounting for the one-hundred-year gap between both tales. In this instance, not only does he endow Asmodeus with the power to morph into any shape, but he also chooses to give him that of being an 'invisible spectator,' which ties in with the earlier-mentioned definition of the *flâneur* as a Protean figure. Moreover, this tale is the prelude to an anthology which reviews London areas, types, or scenes in a similar way to the French physiologies, with chapters such as 'Hyde Park,' 'Night Scenes,' 'Bond Street,' 'A Circulating Library' 'Newgate,' 'A Father,' 'A Daughter,' 'Duelling,' 'A Carnival,' 'Swindling'… The sharp gaze of Asmodeus is used as a tool for ordering, categorizing and *synthesising* the cityscape.

One can find many other instances of this blurring between both figures. In 1812, Etienne de Jouy's *flâneur avant la lettre* explicitly compares himself to Asmodeus: 'Me voilà donc, nouvel Asmodée (mais sans aucune de ses vertus cabalistiques), initié en un moment dans les mystères de vingt ménages.'[26] In this chronicle entitled 'Les six étages d'une maison de la rue Saint Honoré', Etienne de Jouy's hermit, not unlike Lesage's Asmodeus lifting rooftops, peels off the facade of the building to reveal what is inside. In another of his chronicles, 'Les Gens en bonnet de nuit', Jouy also calls attention to the parallels between the two figures. The hermit starts by remarking on the fantastical nature of Lesage's story,[27] but then recounts how he obtained a magical instrument granting its owner the ability to see and

[25] Charles Sedley [pseud.], *Asmodeus; or, the Devil in London: A Sketch* (London: J. Dean, 1808), 27-30.
[26] Étienne de Jouy, *L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin, ou observations sur les mœurs et les usages français au commencement du XIXe siècle*, 5 vols (Paris: Pillet, 1812-1814), N°XXXVIII, 4 avril 1812, 'Les six étages d'une maison de la rue Saint Honoré', vol. 2, 135-6. 'A new Asmodeus (but without any of his cabalistic powers), I find myself initiated into the mysteries of twenty households.'
[27] Jouy, *L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin*, N°CVI, 22 janvier 1814, 'Les Gens en bonnet de nuit', vol. 5, 40-1. 'Le Diable Boiteux offre un tableau de la société si piquant et si vrai, qu'on n'a jamais songé à reprocher à son auteur la bizarrerie du cadre dont il a fait choix. Cette prison d'Asmodée dans une bouteille; [...] ce moyen d'enlever le toit des maisons de Madrid pour voir ce qui s'y passe, sort, à bien prendre, des inventions plus folles qu'ingénieuses.' 'The Lame Devil offers us a picture of society so sharp and true that no one every thought of reproaching its author for the bizarre premises he chose. The bottle in which Asmodeus is imprisoned; […] the power he has to remove the Madrid house roofs to see what is going on beneath them is, when one thinks about it, an invention which is more on the side of madness than on that of ingenuity.'

hear through walls,[28] which endows him with the same powers as Asmodeus. Jouy's work abounds with such exchanges and parallels between the two figures.

As was said before, *Paris ou le Livre des cent-et-un* did not entirely abjure Asmodeus's mode of vision either. The famous critic and journalist Jules Janin was put in charge of portraying Asmodeus in the very first physiology of the series, which underlines the cultural significance of this all-seeing literary devil. What is fascinating about Janin's Asmodeus physiology is that it is strikingly similar to the afore-mentioned *flâneur* physiology[29] which also appeared in *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un*:

> Le diable Asmodée est vieux comme le monde; il n'a pas toujours eu une béquille et une bosse; il n'a pas toujours été enfermé dans un bocal; il ne s'est pas toujours appelé simplement Asmodée, il s'est appelé tour à tour Aristophane, Théophraste, Térence, La Bruyère, Molière surtout; il s'est appelé Voltaire, Rabelais et Beaumarchais; il a porté les plus grands noms du monde poétique et satirique il a touché aux deux extrêmes du génie de l'homme. Il a été Rabelais, voilà pour l'esprit il a été Montaigne, voilà pour le cœur. Asmodée, c'est la philosophie de tous les siècles, qui se résume dans une caricature; Asmodée, c'est la sagesse antique qui se fait française.[30]

Asmodeus and the *flâneur* are both described as age-old shape-shifting figures traversing the centuries unscathed.

Asmodeus' profoundly Protean nature, like the *flâneur*'s, meant that he was a cosmopolitan figure who could easily export itself, cross the Channel and appear in London. In return, his protean nature was reinforced by this cosmopolitanism. Lesage's own work was translated as early as 1750 and was re-edited and re-translated many times throughout the

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[28] Jouy, *L'Hermite de la Chaussée d'Antin*, N°CVI, 22 janvier 1814, 'Les Gens en bonnet de nuit', vol. 5, 40-1. 'Cet instrument magique […] a la propriété merveilleuse de faire pénétrer la vue à travers les corps opaques qu'on lui oppose, et de rapprocher en même teins les objets et les sons de manière à permettre de voir et d'entendre ce qui se passe derrière la plus épaisse muraille.'

[29] Anonymous contributor, 'Le Flâneur à Paris', *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un*, vol. 6, 96-97. See Chapter 1, IV.

[30] Jules Janin, 'Asmodée' in *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un* [1831-1834], vol. 1, 4-5. 'The devil Asmodeus is as old as the hills; he has not always had a crutch and a hump; he has not always been trapped in a bottle; he has not always been called Asmodeus; he has also been called, in turn, Aristophanes, Theophrastus, Terence, La Bruyère, Molière especially; he has been called Voltaire, Rabelais, Beaumarchais; he has borne the greatest names in the world of poets and satirists, he went to both extreme opposites of human genius. He has been Rabelais for the heart, Montaigne for wit. Asmodeus is the philosophy of all centuries embodied in one caricature; Asmodeus is ancient philosophy becoming French.'

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Between 1750 and 1888, *The Devil Upon Crutches* or *The Devil Upon Two Sticks* was translated and re-issued in English at least twenty times.[31] Interestingly, Asmodeus was adopted by English writers who wrote for popular periodicals, a form which evolved and absorbed influences extremely rapidly. It was selected several times as a title for humorous periodicals, as if to give them an identity. The name Asmodeus evoked the immensely appealing idea of omniscience together with the idea of an irreverent and satirical bite. Amongst those periodicals were *Asmodeus in London*, which was issued for a brief period in 1832 and did not sell well, despite Robert Seymour's engraved cartoons. *The Devil in London* was another periodical which started on the 29th of February 1832 and ran for 37 numbers, and which the illustrations of Isaac Robert Cruikshank and Kenny Meadows made reasonably successful. Edward Bulwer-Lytton also took up the figure in *Asmodeus at Large* which first appeared serialized in *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* in 1832.[32] This traffic of aesthetic practices is perhaps best illustrated by the case of Charles Dickens. Dickens was very much aware of the presence of those figures on the French literary scene. He was a huge Francophile, 'he lived in [Paris] for nearly a year in 1846–7, resided in Boulogne for nearly as long in the 1850s and made in total at least twenty visits to France.'[33] As an editor and writer for magazines such as *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, he was in an ideal position to pick up on these Parisian figures and write them into the London cityscape. He owned a French edition of Lesage's book[34] and evoked Asmodeus several times in his novels. Asmodeus might well be behind '*The Shadow*,' which was a prospective title for the magazine which he eventually named *Household Words* (March 1850 to May 1859). Dickens described the title '*The Shadow*' as having the potential to epitomize the Asmodean ideal:

> Now to bind all this together, and to get a character established as it were which any of the writers may maintain without difficulty, I want to suppose a certain Shadow, which may go into any place, by sunlight, moonlight, starlight, firelight, candlelight, and be in all homes, and all nooks and corners, and be supposed to be

[31] Indeed, between 1750 and 1888, editions of Alain Lesage's *The Devil upon Crutches* or *The Devil Upon Two Sticks* were issued in 1750, 1759, 1762, 1770, 1772, 1773, 1777, 1778, 1780, 1785, 1810, 1824, 1830, 1841, 1852, 1877, 1879, 1881, 1888.

[32] Edward Bulwer Lytton, *Asmodeus at Large. By the author of "Pelham," "Eugene Aram," &c. &c. [i.e. Lord Lytton.]* (Philadelphia: Carey & Co., 1833).

[33] Colin Jones, 'French Crossings: I. Tale of Two Cities', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6, 20 (2010), 1-26, (p.26).

[34] Ephraim Sicher, *Rereading the City, Rereading Dickens: Representation, the Novel, and Urban Realism* (New York: AMS Studies in the Nineteenth Century, 2003), 79.

> cognisant of everything, and go everywhere, without the least difficulty. Which may be in the Theatre, the Palace, the House of Commons, the Prisons, the Unions, the Churches, on the Railroad, on the Sea, abroad and at home: a kind of semi-omniscient, omnipresent, intangible creature. I don't think I would call the paper The Shadow: but I want something tacked to that title, to express the notion of it being a cheerful, useful and always welcome Shadow. […] I want the compiled part of the paper to express the idea of this Shadow's having been in libraries, and among the books referred to. I want him to loom as a fanciful thing all over London. [… The title] sets up a creature which isn't the Spectator, and isn't Isaac Bickerstaff, and isn't anything of that kind: but in which people will be perfectly willing to believe, and which is just as mysterious and quaint enough to have a sort of charm for their imagination, while it will represent common-sense and humanity.[35]

The 'shadow' appears as a listening angel which sees and hears all, and is endowed with the omniscience of the Asmodean gaze. Interestingly, the passage refers to some persona which Etienne de Jouy had designated as his forerunners, namely Richard Steele's fictitious editor of *The Tatler* Isaac Bickerstaff and Joseph Addison's *Spectator*. It is interesting to note that Dickens only refers to them in the negative – he seeks to define a character who differs from these predecessors by endowing him with Asmodean powers. One might note that Dickens would later return to this type of flâneurial persona with *The Uncommercial Traveller*. George Augustus Sala, another celebrated journalist and *flâneur*, famously attempted to sketch twenty-four hours of the life of London in his 1859 *Twice Round the Clock, ot The Hours of the Day and Night in London*. He compares himself to Asmodeus five times in his work: he is a 'chronological Asmodeus' to whom his readers must 'hold on by the skirts of [his] cloak as [he] wing[s] his way from quarter to quarter of the immense city.'[36] Sala's Asmodeus forsakes his overviewing position to come closer to the city and, in a way, enacts the transition from the omniscient to the flâneurial gaze. Indeed, Sala's Asmodeus flies closer to the city than Lesage's, and sees London better 'from the top of an omnibus' than from the top of a building: 'you have the inestimable advantage of surveying the world in its workings as you pass along: of being your own Asmodeus, and unroofing London in a ride from the White

[35] Charles Dickens, Letter to John Forster, 7 October 1849, in *The Selected Letters of Charles Dickens, ed. Jenny Hartley* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), 199-200.
[36] George Augustus Sala, *Twice Round the Clock, ot The Hours of the Day and Night in London* [1859] (New York, Leicester University Press, 1971), 49.

Horse Cellar to Hammersmith Gate.'[37] These examples highlight the fluidity with which the references pass between the two countries. Both the *flâneur* and Asmodeus thus travelled back and forth across the Channel and thrived in the very fast-moving environment of periodical productions.

The similarities between the Protean *flâneur* and the age-old shapeshifting devil blur the distinction between the panoptic regime of vision of Asmodeus and the mobile, partial one of the *flâneur*. According to Michel de Certeau, the *flâneur*'s 'rhetoric of walking' is precisely what is interesting, because space cannot be captured in one sweeping gaze. On the contrary, it must be apprehended though physical circulation across the city, with its associated mechanisms of dreams, memories and fables:

> Forme élémentaire de cette expérience, ils sont des marcheurs, *Wandersmänner*, dont le corps obéit aux pleins et aux déliés d'un 'texte' urbain qu'ils écrivent sans pouvoir le lire. Ces praticiens jouent des espaces qui ne se voient pas; ils en ont une connaissance aussi aveugle que dans le corps à corps amoureux. Les chemins qui se répondent dans cet entrelacement, poésies insues dont chaque corps est un élément signé par beaucoup d'autres, échappent à la lisibilité. […] La circulation physique a la fonction itinérante des 'superstitions' d'hier ou d'aujourd'hui. Le voyage (comme la marche) est le substitut des légendes qui ouvraient l'espace à de l'autre.[38]

For De Certeau, walking through the streets offers an experience which is infinitely more diverse than that of gazing at the city from high up, since this mode of apprehending the urban world is sensual, creative and subversive. The authors of *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un* concur with De Certeau on this point: the preface clearly states that physical wandering through the city is to be preferred.

It seems that subsequent physiologies embraced this 'downward' movement in which the city observer steps down from the rooftops to penetrate the city streets. In the famous

[37] Sala, *Twice Round the Clock*, 220.

[38] De Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien*, 141-142. 'They walk – an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, Wändersmanner, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of the urban "text" they write without being able to read it. These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms. The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poems in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility. […] Physical moving about has the itinerant function of yesterday's or today's "superstitions." Travel is a substitute for the legends that used to open up space to something different.' (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, 93; 106-7).

1845 Parisian anthology *Le Diable à Paris*, Satan, seeking to overcome the panoramic survey's shortcomings, sends his most faithful demon Flammèche to explore Paris and chronicle 'everything that is, diabolically speaking, possible to know about it.'[39] Flammèche could be seen as a transitional figure, Asmodeus-like, stepping down from his all-seeing position to descend into the city streets and don the guise of the *flâneur*:

> On l'aperçut un beau matin fumant d'un air mélancolique une cigarette sur […le] boulevard des Italiens. [...]Les premiers jours de son arrivée les avait-il passés, […] à aller partout et à entasser notes sur notes, en Diable qui sait à quoi il s'est engagé. Nous dirons même que c'était avec une sorte de plaisir qu'il avait changé sa figure de l'autre monde contre un visage humain, et caché sous des bottes vernies — ses pieds fourchus. Et personne, assurément, si ce n'est peut-être Satan lui-même, n'aurait pu reconnaître sous sa nouvelle forme de dandy parisien le Diablotin.[40]

Does the *flâneur* resemble Asmodeus, or does the figure of the literary devil imitate the *flâneur*? What is clear is that there is a fascinating interplay between the identities of both figures. Not only does Flammèche conceal his cloven hooves and origins by slipping on the inconspicuous attire of the *flâneur*, he also turns to other literary *flâneurs* for their services. Indeed, Flammèche outsources the work to the capital's most famous writers and artists and assembles miscellaneous texts which ultimately offer a kaleidoscopic, and thus profoundly authentic picture of Paris, as one of the writers appointed by Flammèche explains:

> Paris est un théâtre dont la toile est incessamment levée, […] et il y a autant de manières de considérer les innombrables comédies qui s'y jouent qu'il y a de places dans son immense enceinte. Que chacun de nous le voie comme il pourra, celui-ci du parterre, celui-là des loges, tel autre de l'amphithéâtre: il faudra bien que la vérité se trouve au milieu de ces jugements divers.[41]

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[39] Pierre-Jules Hetzel (ed.), *Le Diable à Paris: Paris et les parisiens: mœurs et coutumes, caractères et portraits des habitants de Paris, tableau complet de leur vie Le Diable à Paris*, 2 vols (P.-J. Hetzel: Paris, 1845-1846), vol. 1, 23. 'Je prétends apprendre de toi tout ce qui s'y passe, et qu'une fois tes notes envoyées, on sache ici de Paris tout ce qu'il est bon, diaboliquement parlant, possible d'en savoir.'

[40] P.-J. Stahl [Hetzel], 'Prologue', *Le Diable à Paris*, vol. 1, 24-25. 'He was spotted one morning smoking with a melancholy air on the boulevard des Italiens. He had spent the first days which followed his arrival going everywhere and accumulating notes, being a devil who knew what he had pledged himself to do. We shall even say that it was with a certain amount of pleasure that he had cast off his underworld appearance to take human form and concealed his cloven feet in patent leather boots. And assuredly, nobody – save perhaps Satan himself – could have recognized the devil in his new form of the Parisian dandy.'

[41] P.-J. Stahl [Hetzel], 'Prologue', *Le Diable à Paris*, vol. 1, 23. 'Paris is a theatre the curtain of which is always up. There are as many ways to look at the innumerable comedies played upon its stage as there are seats within

Flammèche summons a body of *flâneurs* whose wanderings through the city enables them to set down in writing the substance of the modern city.

Flammèche is the transitional figure *par excellence* between Asmodeus and the *flâneur*. He is both the omniscient devil, the editor, and the *flâneur* observing Paris at street-level. Flammèche's personality also combines Asmodeus's mischievous traits with the *flâneur*'s inquiring mind, which seems to suggest that one of the reasons for the *flâneur*'s persistence might be that his personality has a history and a continuity. This coming together of the two figures is perhaps best illustrated in Gavarni's wonderful frontispiece to *Le Diable à Paris*.[42] Jillian Taylor Lerner has analysed Gavarni's illustration extensively and demonstrates that Flammèche is the editor Hetzel's fictional alter ego. She even points out that 'Hetzel's sharp facial features and moustaches are recognisable.'[43] Gavarni's engraving brings together Asmodeus's fiendish attributes (the cloven foot, the horns) with the *flâneur*'s sartorial elegance (the inconspicuous tailored black suit, the elegant stirrups, cuffs and boots). More importantly, the panoramic perspective of the map-maker, which is signified through Flammèche's towering presence over the map of Paris, is combined with the keen and detailed gaze of the *flâneur*, which is signified through the metonymy of the monocle. The depiction of the Flammèche's panoptic gaze illustrates the processes described by Michel de Certeau. The map epitomizes the fact that from high up, the 'giant mass is immobilized' and the city becomes legible. In *Le Diable à Paris*, this map is literally 'transformed into a texturology,' since it is through Hetzel's texts that Parisians readers will apprehend the teeming metropolis. However, the Parisian text can only be comprehended by capturing the *flâneur*'s or Daedalus's experience of the urban labyrinth. It is through these 'intertwining, unrecognized poems in which each body is an element signed by many others,'[44] that legibility can be achieved. More precisely, it is by capturing the intersection, the intertwining of many *flâneurs*' texts or 'fragments of trajectories' that the city can be read. The engraving tells us that this is only made possible through the collecting activities of Hetzel the editor, whose activity is symbolized by the hook and ragpicker's basket he is carrying. It is perhaps because one of the devil's most common attributes is polymorphism that Gavarni's illustration so aptly

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its walls. Each of us must view it as best they can – this man from the stalls, that man from a box, another from the galleries. The truth will surely emerge out of these diverse perceptions.'

[42] See Figure 2. Paul Gavarni, Frontispiece of *Le Diable à Paris*, 1841, wood engraving.

[43] Taylor Lerner, 'A Devil's-Eye View of Paris', 235.

[44] Michel de Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien*, 141-142. *The Practices of Everyday Life*, 93.

captures the metamorphosis of Asmodeus into the *flâneur*. On a more general level, the engraving also illustrates the permanent process of transformation which characterizes the *flâneur*.

Another trope bringing the two figures together is the theatrical metaphor, which physiologies often resort to. *Flâneurs* can behold the city from a multiplicity of viewpoints, be it from the upper slips of the theatre or from the stalls. While Balzac liked to define himself as a *flâneur*, the title given to his collection of interlinked novels, *The Human Comedy*, suggests that he possessed the satirical insight of Asmodeus, seeing through the hypocrisies and foibles of the actors of this world. In the prologue to *Le Diable à Paris*, the *flâneur* becomes the ideal synthesis between the two aforementioned modes of vision, which is a recurrent idea in the Parisian physiologies. Janin describes Asmodeus as someone who, like the *flâneur*, has progressively slipped into everyday life. In his view, everyone has now become that privileged observer, which ties in with the paradox of the *flâneur* being both exceptional and anonymous: 'Asmodée n'est plus nulle part; c'est qu'en effet Asmodée est partout; Asmodée n'est plus quelqu'un, Asmodée c'est tout le monde.'[45] The amalgamation of the two figures is even clearer in 'Le Flâneur à Paris,' which opens with a reference not to the *flâneur*, but to Asmodeus: 'Ce monde est un vaste théâtre. Asmodée, mon ami, la métaphore est bien usée.'[46] Asmodeus is portrayed as a privileged spectator for whom 'All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players:'[47]

> Ce monde est un vaste théâtre où mille acteurs différents d'humeur, de costume, de caractère, masqués, musqués, grimés, gourmés, tondus, frisés, bariolés en cent manières, se disputent les premiers rôles et se montrent à peine dignes des moins importants. La scène n'en est que plus animée et plus curieuse à étudier sans doute mais qu'est-ce qu'un spectacle, quelque piquant qu'il soit dans sa variété, s'il n'a pas de spectateurs ?[48]

[45] Jules Janin, 'Asmodée', 14. 'Asmodeus is nowhere to be seen nowadays; it is because Asmodeus is everywhere; Asmodeus is not someone anymore, he is everyone.'
[46] Anon, 'Le Flâneur à Paris', 95. 'This world is but a vast theatre. Asmodeus, my friend, this is a well-travelled metaphor.'
[47] Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II, 7.
[48] Anon, 'Le Flâneur à Paris', 96. 'This world is a vast theatre where a thousand actors in different spirits, costumes, characters – masked, perfumed, made-up, shaven, curled, painted in a hundred ways – fight for the leading parts when they are hardly worthy of the lesser ones. All this, no doubt, makes the scene more animated and intriguing to study, but what is a spectacle, however fascinating and varied, without any spectators?'

What is crucial here is that the author underlines the importance of the spectator without whom the spectacle has no *raison d'être* – it is the spectator who brings the spectacle to life and shapes it. Further on, the theatre is described as one of the *flâneur*'s favourite haunts where, like Asmodeus, he can observe the movements of the public: 'Son poste est au foyer; c'est là qu'il établit son quartier-général.'[49] However, this new *flâneur* cannot be content with the lame devil's remote viewpoint: 'Il étoufferait, et sa vue serait gênée, dans cette demeure-de verre que le plus confiant des philosophes souhaitait jadis d'habiter. C'est une plante que la serre tuerait, et qui ne prospère qu'en plein vent.'[50] The 'glass house' evoked here is reminiscent of the glass phial in which Asmodeus is imprisoned in Lesage's *Le Diable boiteux*, which underlines the liberation enacted by the *flâneurial* viewpoint. The ideal *flâneur* described in the physiologies of the 1830s and 1840s thus combines both types of vision. In a later Parisian anthology dating from 1852, the celebrated *Tableau de Paris*, Texier even finds the transcendent bird's-eye view ill-adapted to the portrayal of urban life:

> Voulez-vous la voir dans toute sa grandeur, cette fière cite étendue à vos pieds et déroulant sous vos regards son vaste panorama? Montez la rue des martyrs, les degrés du Panthéon, les sentiers du Père Lachaise. […] Vus à vol d'oiseau, on dirait que ces édifices se touchent, et des lieues les séparent. […] Mais laissons là le pinceau du paysagiste. […] Ce qu'il reste à décrire, c'est l'âme de ce grand corps, c'est le pêle-mêle grouillant, vivant, agissant au milieu de ce pêle-mêle encore harmonieux. […] C'est le Paris de chair et d'os, le Paris d'hommes après le Paris de pierre. Entrez dans la grande ville: voici la foule, toujours la foule, et notre langue et toutes les langues issues de la dispersion des enfants de Noé seraient insuffisantes à nous la figurer.[51]

In this case, the *flâneur* has an access to both types of gazing but immersion in the city is to be preferred. In this 1852 preface, the *flâneur* has replaced Asmodeus as the presiding figure

[49] Anon, 'Le Flâneur à Paris', 107. 'His post is in the foyer; that is where he sets up his headquarters.'
[50] Anon, 'Le Flâneur à Paris', 100. 'He would suffocate and his view would be hindered in this glass house which the most trusting of philosophers wanted to inhabit in former times. He is a plant which the greenhouse would kill, and which only flourishes in the open air.'
[51] Edmond Texier, 'Introduction', in Edmond Textier (ed.), *Tableau de Paris*, 2 vols (Paulin and Le Chevalier: Paris, 1852–1853) vol. 1, iii. 'Do you want to see this proud city, in all its grandeur, stretched out at your feet and unfurling its vast panorama before your gaze? Climb the rue des Martyrs, the levels of the Panthéon, the paths of Père Lachaise […] From a bird's-eye view, one could say that the edifices touch each other […] But leave the landscape brush there […] What remains for us to describe is the soul of this great body[…] the Paris of flesh and bone, the Paris of men after the Paris of stone. Enter into the big city: here is the crowd, always the crowd, and our language and all languages which came from the dispersion of Noah's descendants are insufficient to represent it.'

who reigns over the texts of Parisian anthologies. Yet, the figure of Asmodeus lurks beneath the modish and affable surface of the urban pedestrian – the *flâneur* has absorbed the Asmodean attributes and internalized the panoptic gaze. The transition from the panoptic Asmodean gaze to the partial flâneurial one illustrates the political, historical, hermeneutic, and epistemological shift which marked this period.

IV. The *flâneur* as a dialectical image?

This part of my analysis will focus on a daguerreotype by Charles Nègre in 1853, entitled 'Le Stryge.'[52] I will use this image to deconstruct the nature of the *flâneur*, or rather to explore the nature of this construct. I will first show how the image manages to encapsulate the fusion of Asmodeus and the *flâneur*, which points to this shift of paradigm in urban vision. I will then explore the archaeological nature of the image to understand how the historic depth of both figures affects the construction of the *flâneur*. This will lead me to suggest that the *flâneur*, just like Nègre's daguerreotype, functions like a dialectical image – it is a figure in which the present and the past come together to produce new meaning.[53]

The suggestion that the *flâneur* reconciles both types of vision seems to be epitomized in a photograph by Charles Nègre's image, which shows a melancholy-looking gargoyle side by side with a *flâneur*-like gentleman gazing at the city. Jillian Taylor Lerner analysed the photograph and seems to corroborate this analysis:

> We could interpret them as a comparative illustration of two models of vision and knowledge side-by-side: with the medieval fossil's panoramic remove offsetting the advantages of the modern observer's dynamic social perspective. Moreover, this professional association suggests that the top-hatted observer is not only a constituent but also an influential producer of contemporary Parisian culture. He

[52] See 314Figure 4. Charles Nègre, *Le Stryge*, 1853, calotype, gelatin-silver print, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
[53] AP, [N2a, 3], 462. 'It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal one, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent.'

> has climbed the cathedral's tower seeking some distance from the crowd and the fabric of the city, thus appropriating the commanding vantage of the demonic observer beside him; yet he brings with him a measure of subjective experience and social influence that could only be accumulated and exercised in the labyrinth below. Reconciling initiated proximity and exegetical distance, he stakes out an authorial position that James Clifford has shown to be central to ethnographic authority, namely that of a 'participant-observer', both inside and outside the cultural totality he represents.[54]

If we follow Taylor Lerner's analysis, the urban observer, from being a somewhat passive figure, has morphed into a skilled observer of city life, who has adopted the panoptic gaze of Asmodeus and who is also endowed with the power to move about the city, decipher and fathom out the many layers of the urban palimpsest. He captures the essence of modernity and enables his contemporaries to understand it. In this case, in Nègre's photograph, one might say that the prostrate and despondent creature is lost in the labyrinth of his own mind and is incapable of interacting with and apprehending the bustling city which lays at his feet, whereas the *flâneur*-like figure standing next to him has come up to his level to apprehend the teeming expanse which spreads beneath them. The ascent of the *flâneur* thus points to a city-observer who is much more involved in the hermeneutic deciphering of the city space. In this view, the *flâneur* combines the dream of totalizing vision and the power to walk into and penetrate the 'humming hive' of society, to use Balzac's words. This interpretation endorses the view that the *flâneur*'s gaze is more powerful than ever. By juxtaposing the figure of the *flâneur* with that of the devil, Nègre implicitly makes the *flâneur* into the modern double of Asmodeus. This mirroring process underlines the parallels and filiation between both figures, reminding us that the *flâneur* is a descendant of Asmodeus. It echoes, on a visual plane, Victor Hugo's famous phrase in *Notre-Dame de Paris*: 'Ceci tuera cela. Le livre tuera l'édifice.'[55] This sentence brings to light the palimspestuous nature of the *flâneur*, this modern literary figure who appears in the periodical press and who, by morphing into a new shape, overshadows its earlier forms. The *flâneur*, like Asmodeus, is a figure of endless transformation, who is defined by polymorphism – but whose superiority lies in his capacity to combine both types of gazing.

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[54] Taylor Lerner, 'A Devil's-Eye View of Paris', 243.

[55] Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris et Les Travailleurs de la mer*, ed. J. Seebacher et Y. Gohin (Paris: Gallimard, Collection 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade', 1975), (V, 2), 174. 'This will kill that. The book will kill the edifice.'

Similarly, the discourse developed in the physiologies increasingly attempts to convey the idea of an all-seeing, almighty *flâneur*. They endow him with the power to decipher the fluctuating urban palimpsest, to capture the essence of modernity and to enable his contemporaries to comprehend it. His role it to understand and translate the enigmas and secrets of the city, and the trope of the city as a text to be deciphered is recurrent in *flâneur* physiologies:

> Il y a sous la première enveloppe de chaque chose des rapports inconnus, des aperçus ignorés, tout un nouveau monde d'idées, de réflexions et de sentiments qui s'éveillent et jaillissent tout à coup sous le regard exercé de l'observateur, comme la source cachée sous la sonde du géologue. […] Tout existe, vit, se meut et pose pour l'observateur. Or, comme nous l'avons dit, qu'est-ce que le flâneur, sinon l'observateur en action, l'observateur dans son expression la plus élevée et la plus éminemment utile ?[56]

In this passage, Lacroix describes the *flâneur* as an expert and learned exegete of the obscure Parisian text – he is the reader of urban life *par excellence*. Lacroix also compares him to a geologist, which is reminiscent of Benjamin's archaeologist metaphor and also evokes the idea of layers or strata. The *flâneur* is thus an expert working to retrace or retrieve the history or prehistory of the city. He is endowed with the power to decipher the 'hieroglyphics of the human heart.'[57] Similarly, in his preface to *Les Dessous de Paris*, Delvau compares his own literary endeavours to that of other literary *flâneurs* who preceded him and ends up on this interesting metaphor: the writer's (or *flâneur*'s) mission is to elucidate the riddles of the Parisian sphinx. One might also see the texts of his literary predecessors as a palimpsest, as extra layers which *flâneurs* have to penetrate and read through in order to elucidate the Parisian text.

> Je viens après Mercier, après Rétif de la Bretonne, […] et surtout après Balzac, Gérard de Nerval et Privat d'Anglemont, les plus courageux explorateurs qui aient été jusqu'ici. Mais enfin je viens comme je peux, à mon heure, après la moisson, – pour ramasser les épis oubliés. J'échouerai sans doute dans cette âpre besogne de

[56] Lacroix, 'Le Flâneur', 71-2. 'Beneath the outer shell of each thing lie unknown relations and insights, a whole new world of ideas, reflections and feelings which wake and spring up under the practiced gaze the observer, like hidden ground water under the divining rod of the dowser. […] Everything exists, lives, moves and comes to a halt for the observer. And as we said before, what is the *flâneur* but the observer in action, at his best and most useful?'

[57] Lacroix, 'Le Flâneur', 66.

> raconteur […] mais du moins j'aurai tenté. […] Si chacun essayait ainsi, on finirait bien par avoir, un jour ou l'autre, un portrait ressemblant de ce sphinx qu'on appelle Paris.[58]

Interestingly, the motif of archaeology was not confined to the *Tableau de Paris*. Nègre's photograph too is, in a sense, archaeological. In a way, the city spread at the feet of the two figures bears resemblance to an immense excavation site. Moreover, the medieval presence of the gargoyle is symbolic of a gesture that looks back to the past. Nègre's daguerreotype seems to suggest that looking to the past might be a key to unlocking the mysteries of the present moment. I shall now follow this suggestion and look to the past to try to decipher the complex meaning of the image and of the *flâneur* himself.

The presence of the past so evidently brought out in Nègre's image and in the texts written about Paris produced during that period brings to mind a metaphor which Hegel developed in his *Lectures on fine Arts*. I will now use this analysis, which explores the significance of the transition from the Egyptian sphinx to the Greek sphinx, to shed light on the way the photograph functions. For Hegel, the symbolic work of art and its mystery is best embodied in the Egyptian Sphinx – it is a motionless idol which remains immutably silent. I would like to draw a parallel between the figure of Asmodeus and Hegel's Egyptian sphinx. Looking at Nègre's photograph, one might suggest that before the nineteenth century, the streets of Paris are guarded and observed by a somewhat petrified Asmodeus, the motionless, immutable gargoyle which remains perched on top of Notre-Dame de Paris. He is the passive, enigmatic and impenetrable symbol of the unknown and unknowable quality of the city, of the unsolvable riddle of the Paris streets. He is akin to the Great Sphinx of Giza, the emblematic Sphinx which embodies the mysterious quality of the symbol which does not let itself be deciphered:

> The works of Egyptian art in their mysterious symbolism are therefore riddle; the objective riddle *par excellence*. As a symbol for this proper meaning of the Egyptian spirit we may mention the Sphinx. It is, as it were, the symbol of the symbolic itself. In innumerable quantities, set up

[58] Alfred Delvau, *Les Dessous de Paris* (1860), 9. 'I come after Mercier, Rétif de la Bretonne, […] and especially after Balzac, Gérard de Nerval and Privat d'Anglemont, the bravest explorers that ever were. But I come now, in my own time, after the harvest, to collect the forgotten ears. I shall probably fail in the arduous task of story-telling […], but at least, I will have tried. […] If everyone did so, we would surely, sooner or later, obtain a portrait resembling the sphinx which we call Paris.'

> in rows in hundreds, there are sphinx shapes in Egypt, constructed out of the hardest stone, polished, covered with hieroglyphics, and [one] near Cairo is of such colossal size that the lion's claws alone amount to a man's height. Some of them are recumbent animal bodies out of which as an upper part, the human body struggles, here and there again there is a ram's head, but elsewhere most commonly a female head. Out of the dull strength and power of the animal the human spirit tries to push itself forward, without coming to a perfect portrayal of its own freedom and animated shape, because it must still remain confused and associated with what is other than itself. This pressure for self-conscious spirituality which does not apprehend itself from its own resources in the one reality adequate to itself but only contemplates itself in what is related to it and brings itself into consciousness in precisely what is strange to it, is the symbolics as such which at this peak becomes a riddle.[59]

For Hegel, however, the ancient Greeks invented philosophy and thus reappraised the idea of beauty and dared question its premises. Oedipus, on his journey to Thebes, 'tumbled the sphinx from the rock' by answering her riddle. The Greek Sphinx, with her smiling face, open eyes and two wings spread out represents a more dynamic form of art which speaks to our mind and questions it, as opposed to a more static form of enigmatic beauty which immobilizes and prostrates the mind with awe:

> It is in this sense that the Sphinx in the Greek myth, which we ourselves may interpret again symbolically, appears as a monster asking a riddle. The Sphinx propounded the well-known conundrum: What is it that in the morning goes on four legs, at mid-day two, and in the evening on three? Oedipus found the simple answer: a man, and he tumbled the Sphinx from the rock. The explanation of the symbol lies in the absolute meaning, in the spirit, just as the famous Greek inscription calls to man: Know thyself. The light of consciousness is the clarity which makes its concrete content shine clearly through the shape belonging and appropriate to itself, and in its [objective] existence reveals itself alone.[60]

[59] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*, trans. T.M. Knox 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), vol. 1, 360-1.
[60] Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Arts*, vol. 1, 361.

I would suggest that the inquiring and mobile *flâneur* who goes down into the streets to decipher its hieroglyphics is the modern incarnation of both Oedipus, the ancient solver of riddles, and of his double, Hegel's inquiring Greek sphinx – he is both a riddle and the solver of riddles. The metaphor of the sphinx aptly echoes the contrast exhibited in Charles Nègre's photograph. The ascent of the *flâneur* points to a city-observer who combines panopticism and mobility, and who is more suited to the hermeneutic deciphering of the city space.

The archaeological metaphors which pervaded the above-mentioned verbal and visual discourse fed into the general process of self-mythologisation of Paris which marked the period – Nègre's famous photograph is a case in point. The photograph's archaeological overtones take Asmodeus and the *flâneur* apart again. It suggests that they are separate figures existing in different times precisely around the period when Asmodeus is on the brink of extinction and seems to have been subsumed by the *flâneur*. The co-presence of the age-old mythical creature and of the modern gentleman in Nègre's daguerreotype underlines the profoundly dialectical relationship between past and present which constitutes the *flâneur*. In this archaeological image, the traces of the old in the new are made evident, not least in the use of the recently developed daguerreotype technique. The medieval nature of Asmodeus is not only reinforced by its contrast with the modern *flâneur*, but also by several other elements.

As was said earlier, the city spreading around them is strikingly reminiscent of a site excavation. The photograph was taken in 1853, which is the year during which Georges-Eugène Haussmann took up his post as the Seine prefect, and launched his Renovation of Paris. Paris was re-discovering its past at the same time as it was asserting, constructing and literally building up its modernity. As a result, the period was marked by a resurgence of the medieval. Victor Hugo was a fierce advocate for the preservation of 'le Vieux Paris' throughout his life – he had pledged himself to the cause as early as 1825 in an article entitled 'Guerre aux démolisseurs.'[61] The success of his 1829 novel, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, had also rekindled the interest in medieval architecture. Moreover, during the Haussmann plan, the conservationist and architect Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc tirelessly worked at restoring and enhancing the medieval features of the capital:

[61] The article was eventually published in 1832. Victor Hugo, 'Guerre aux démolisseurs', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1er mars 1832.

> Incrustations from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were ruthlessly excised, to allow the gothic idiom to dominate; the adjacent Hôtel-Dieu demolished outright to improve the monument's all-round visibility; and new statues and gargoyles commissioned in the approved gothic manner. Important here too was the six-fold increase in the size of the square in front of the cathedral, the ancient Parvis de Notre-Dame.[62]

The idea of the 'Vieux Paris,' of medieval Paris, was thus essentially a product of the city's modernisation. Colin Jones noted that 'the boulevardisation and modernisation associated with the creation of the new city, involving the sweeping away of medieval and post-medieval debris and the flattening of the terrain, uncovered what lay below the surface.'[63] The poet who most contributed to this mythologisation of Paris in which the old and the new became tied together was perhaps Charles Baudelaire. In his poem 'Le Cygne,' he brings the modern and the mythical together through his memory, or rather through the creative process of remembering:

> Paris change! Mais rien dans ma mélancolie
> N'a bougé! Palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs,
> Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie,
> Et mes chers souvenirs sont plus lourds que des rocs.[64]

The 'Vieux Paris' lives on in the poet's *imaginaire* and dominates it. The enjambment in the second verse brings out the negative 'Ne,' and thus negates the power of the modern which, paradoxically, fills the city space with its 'new palaces, scaffolding, and blocks of stone.' In spite of these recent additions, 'naught has stirred'. As Walter Benjamin pointed out, '"Le Cygne" has the movement of a cradle rocking back and forth between modernity and antiquity' (AP [J72, 5], 356). I would say that Nègre's photograph encapsulates and reflects, in visual terms, the movement of a cradle rocking back and forth between modernity and the *medieval age* which leaves its mark on Paris during that period. The dark hues of the cathedral and of the cathedral walls echo each other and associate the city to its age-old, Gothic past. The cityscape in the background, with its quasi-archeological layers, reminds us that the city's

[62] Colin Jones, 'Theodore Vacquer and the Archeology of Modernity in Haussmann's Paris', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6, 17 (2007), 157-183, (p.166).
[63] Jones, 'Theodore Vacquer', 167.
[64] Charles Baudelaire, 'Le Cygne' in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, in Claude Pichois (ed.), *Charles Baudelaire, Œuvres Complètes* (OC), 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Collection 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade', 1975), vol. 1, 86. 'Paris has changed, but in my grief no change. / New palaces and scaffoldings and blocks, / To me, are allegories, nothing strange. / My memories are heavier than rocks.' (Roy Campbell (trans.), 'The Swan', *Poems of Baudelaire* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1952), 116)

past lurks right below its surface, and reflects, on a different plane, the archeological makeup of the *flâneur*. There is an interesting reciprocity here between subject and object, – between the *flâneur* himself and the city he is gazing at.

Indeed, all the gazing figures who preceded the *flâneur* are ancestral layers which are part of the imagined historicity of the *flâneur* and underlie our perception of the figure. The physical proximity between the gargoyle and the modern gentleman standing next to him points to the parallels that exist between them. In Nègre's daeguerreotype, the gargoyle's long history mirrors the *flâneur*'s more recent history in the making. The *stryge*, which rapidly became hailed as the quintessence of medieval Paris, was actually only placed on top of Notre-Dame in 1850 and was designed by Viollet-le-Duc himself. The *stryge* rapidly became the figurehead of the mid-nineteenth century Gothic fantasy which swept over Paris. It is one of the layers which constitute the figure of the omniscient devil. The story of this sculpture is fascinating: Ségolène Le Men[65] explains that Viollet-le-Duc drew his inspiration from Victor Hugo's 1831 novel *Notre-Dame de Paris*, and Hugo's imaginary hunchback probably lurks beneath the surface of the sculpture. The writer often compares Quasimodo to the gargoyles perched on top of Notre-Dame: 'On eût pu le prendre pour un de ces monstres de pierre par la gueule desquels se dégorgent depuis six cents ans les longues gouttières de la cathédrale.'[66] The story of the naming of the sculpture itself is interesting, since it was not immediately known as 'Le Stryge'. Charles Meryon's famous engraving of the sculpture popularized it.[67] Meryon deliberately emphasized the Gothic aspect of the city by exaggerating the perspectives and filling the sky with ominous birds of prey. He had first named it 'la Vigie' ('the lookout') before opting for a more archaic version, 'le stryge.'[68] One might note that Meryon's first choice, 'vigie', highlights the idea of the watchful gaze. A French collector, André Jammes, subsequently named Nègre's daguerreotype 'Le Stryge' after Meryon's

[65] Ségolène Le Men, *La Cathédrale illustrée d'Hugo à Monet. Regard romantique et modernité* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1998), 122-3.
[66] Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris* (VIII, 6), 348.
[67] See Figure 3. Charles Meryon, *Le Stryge*, 1853, etching, 17,2 x 13,2 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.
[68] Ségolène Le Men, 'De Notre-Dame de Paris au Stryge: l'invention d'une image', *Livraisons d'histoire de l'architecture*, no. 20 – (2ème semestre 2010), 49-73, (p.70). 'Meryon écrit à Philippe Burty: "J'avais d'abord appelé cette pièce la vigie. Je pense que cette présente dénomination convient mieux encore." Certains éléments phonétiques du mot "vigie," le son i et la gutturale, sont maintenus dans "stryge," il opte pour la version archaïsante en y.' 'Meryon writes the following to Philippe Burty: "I had first called this piece the look-out. I think this new name suits it even better." Some of the phonetic elements of the word "vigie", the [i] sound and the guttural, are kept in the word "stryge," and he chooses the archaic version of it with a y.'

engraving. Le Men's analysis of the *stryge* demonstrates how the image does not have a single author. Various writers, illustrators, etchers, architects, sculptors, and photographers contributed to its creation. The fact that Meryon etched 'le vieux Paris' in the background, while Nègre photographed Haussmann's Paris taking shape shows how quickly these shifts in the construction of a figure such as the *stryge* occurred. This example shows that this devil, like the *flâneur*, is a multi-layered, constantly updated construct.

The cultural and archaeological depth of Nègre's image thus destabilizes its meaning, and brings out its dialectical nature. In the light of this, Taylor Lerner's initial reading of the photograph has to be reconsidered. I would argue that one might also read the image differently and see the presence of the melancholy gargoyle as undermining the idea of absolute omniscience. Nègre's photograph emphasizes the historicity of Asmodeus. The medieval nature of the gargoyle reminds us that the devil was originally the agent of deceptive vision, illusion, delusion and hallucination. In the eighteenth century, he became that of distanced clear-sightedness. That vision is revised and transformed yet again by physiologists, who deem the devil's panoptic vision insufficient. Asmodeus, then, becomes the embodiment of abysmal doubt, which his posture seems to denote. It would suggest that the presence of the petrified Asmodeus also hints at the impossibility of ever fully apprehending the city. His half satirical, half-melancholy presence might be the recognition of the limits of the gaze, which might see the most when it accepts and confronts what it cannot fully comprehend. On the one hand, the ghostly and antiquated presence of Asmodeus erodes or contaminates the polished surface of the all-seeing *flâneur*. On the other hand, it bestows depth and wealth of meaning on the *flâneur*. The photograph's interest lies precisely in the fact that it does not reconcile opposites, but upholds the ambiguity of the *flâneur*'s gaze and position within the city. I would argue that both figures function like 'potential images,' according to Dario Gamboni's definition: potential images are images 'established – in the realm of the virtual – by the artist but dependent on the beholder for their realization, and their property is to make the beholder aware – either painfully or enjoyably – of the active, subjective nature of seeing.'[69]

[69] Dario Gamboni, *Potential Images: Ambiguity and Indeterminacy in Modern Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002), 18.

Moving the argument from the visual to the literary, this ambivalent *flâneur* might be best embodied in one of Balzac's most celebrated *flâneurs*, Rastignac, who is seen casting a final glance over the city at the end of the *Père Goriot*:

> Rastignac, resté seul, fit quelques pas vers le haut du cimetière et vit Paris tortueusement couché le long des deux rives de la Seine, où commençaient à briller les lumières. Ses yeux s'attachèrent presque avidement entre la colonne de la place Vendôme et le dôme des Invalides, là où vivait ce beau monde dans lequel il avait voulu pénétrer. Il lança sur cette ruche bourdonnante un regard qui semblait par avance en pomper le miel, et dit ces mots grandioses: 'À nous deux maintenant!' Et, pour premier acte de défi qu'il portait à la société, Rastignac alla dîner chez Madame de Nucingen.[70]

In this passage, the Asmodean power of totalizing vision is combined with the impulse to penetrate the 'humming hive' of Parisian society. At first sight, Rastignac seems to embody this all-seeing *flâneur*. However, this climactic image is undermined by the ironical concluding words, which come at the end of a novel that has repeatedly exposed the serious limitations of Rastignac's narrow gaze. Or might this willingness to engage with the city again be one of Rastignac's redeeming features? Like Nègre's dialectical image, the passage does not yield any definite answer but maintains ambiguities alive.

We know that for Benjamin, the *flâneur* is in an ideal position to see and capture dialectical images: 'in the course of *flânerie*, far-off times and places interpenetrate the landscape and the present moment' (AP [M2,4], 419). The *flâneur* can gather images from the myriad fragments of the past scattered around him and re-construct, re-present them in a new constellation which shows both past and present in a new light. Incidentally, this *flâneur* is not unlike Benjamin the material historian himself, 'whose construction of the prehistory of modernity and its projection into our present requires a distinctive mode of remembering.'[71] I

[70] Honoré de Balzac, *Le Père Goriot*, in Pierre-Georges Castex (ed.), *La Comédie humaine*, 12 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Collection 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade', 1976-1981), vol. 3 [1976], 290. 'Rastignac, now all alone, walked a few paces to the higher part of the cemetery, and saw Paris spread out along the windings banks of the Seine, where the lights were beginning to shine. His eyes fastened almost hungrily on the area between the column in the Place Vendôme and the dome of the Invalides, home to the fashionable society to which he had sought to gain admission. He gave this murmuring hive a look which seemed already to savour the sweetness to be sucked from it, and pronounced the epic challenge: "It's between the two of us now!" And as the first shot in the war he had thus declared on Society, Rastignac went to dine with Madame de Nucingen.' (A. J. Krailsheimer (ed., trans.), *Père Goriot* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2009), 263).

[71] David Frisby, 'The *flâneur* in social theory', in Keith Tester (ed.), *The Flâneur* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 99.

would like to suggest that Nègre's photograph functions like a dialectical image. The clash of the present and the past in the figures of two signifiers belonging to different frameworks – the contemporary *flâneur* and the ancient Asmodeus turned to stone – raises a radically new third signifier: the dialectical image. This image is radically different in that it suggests a fusion between the two figures while simultaneously undoing the very concept of fusion. The photographic medium itself is part of the new meaning which is created – it emphasises the discrepancy between the old and the new and also encapsulates the rapidity with which new meanings might surge up. My analysis proposes that the elusive and polymorphous *flâneur*, who accumulates and internalizes successive layers of meaning, might also function like a dialectical image himself. In him, he carries this amalgamation of past and present which is perpetually created, recreated and updated, which is a conclusion Benjamin himself seems to have reached.

> The *flâneur*, as Benjamin appears to conceive of him in these notes, and in his correspondence with Adorno, was a "dialectical image", an archetype in which an aspect of historical reality was made manifest. As Buck-Morss has formulated it, Benjamin seems to have seen the *flâneur* as offspring, "philosophical insight into the nature of modern subjectivity – that to which Heidegger referred abstractly as the 'thrownness' of the subject – by placing it within specific historical existence."[72]

Thus, the gaze of the *flâneur* perceives and conjures up dialectical images while the *flâneur* himself functions like one.

Charles Nègre's daguerreotype exemplifies and crystallises the historical depth of the *flâneur*, who has subsumed the God-like viewpoint of the literary devil and yet, who remains closely associated with him. The shape-shifting *flâneur* is, on the one hand, a composite figure who blends the commanding viewpoint of Asmodeus with that of the city-stroller who explores the city from within. However, he never quite reconciles them. The contrast between the archaic nature of Asmodeus and the modernity of the *flâneur* brings out his the dialectical nature. The gaze of the *flâneur* escapes stable definitions and keeps paradoxes and tensions alive, thereby always interrogating us. One might say he functions perfectly as a dialectical

[72] Dana Brand, *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), 7.

image by constantly reconfiguring the associations between past and present, thus perpetually showing us the city in a new light, unearthing previously undisclosed meanings.

V. The Dickensian gaze: the case of *The Old Curiosity Shop*

Let us now examine how these shifts in the construction of the *flâneur* influenced urban perception in London by looking at the workings of the Dickensian gaze. To do so, I shall focus on one novel in particular, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, which opens with a flâneurial narrator, Master Humphrey, who disappears after a while to make way for a quasi-omniscient – or Asmodean – narrator.

We first see the capital through the eyes of Master Humphrey, who explains his night-walking from his inability to sleep. At first sight, Master Humphrey is a transparent shell who walks us through the London streets – he is all eyes for us. One should note that this Master Humphrey is very much like Dickens himself, who suffered from insomnia and used to pace the streets of London at night as a remedy against sleepleeness and to find inspiration for his own stories. Already, one notes a parallel between walking and writing. For Master Humphrey, the mental spaces and the city-space merge in insomnia – the city becomes a nightmarish space which invades Master Humphrey's night:

> That constant pacing to and fro, that never-ending restlessness, […] think of the hum and noise always being present to his sense, and of the stream of life that will not stop, pouring on, on, on, through all his restless dreams, as if he were condemned to lie, dead but conscious, in a noisy churchyard, and had no hope of rest for centuries to come (OCS, 9).

For Master Humphrey, pacing the city-streets at night is a fate which is preferable: 'I have fallen insensibly into this habit, both because it favours my infirmity and because it affords me greater opportunity of speculating on the characters and occupations of those who fill the streets. The glare and hurry of broad noon are not adapted to idle pursuits like mine' (OCS, 9). The word 'speculate' is particularly interesting here because it encapsulates what Master Humphrey's *flânerie* effectively does. As was pointed out earlier, the word 'speculation'

carries an overtone of its obsolete sense defined by the OED as 'the faculty or power of seeing; sight, vision, esp. intelligent or comprehending vision.'[73] However, the current use of the word indicates that Master Humphrey does not only record the city for us. To speculate is, above all, 'to observe or view mentally, to consider, examine, or reflect upon with close attention; to contemplate; to theorize upon.'[74] Thus, Master Humphrey is not only reading the city, he is primarily re-reading – or translating – the city-space. Master Humphrey's night is a space of fantasy:

> The glare and hurry of broad noon are not adapted to idle pursuits like mine; a glimpse of passing faces caught by the light of a street-lamp or a shop window is often better for my purpose than their full revelation in the daylight; and, if I must add the truth, night is kinder in this respect than day, which too often destroys an air-built castle at the moment of its completion, without the least ceremony or remorse (OCS, 9).

Master Humphrey prefers night-walking to walking in broad daylight because half-light enables him to lay the foundations of his 'air-built castles.' The street provides him with elements of suggestions, 'glimpses' which he can build on. The passage illustrates how much re-writing his nocturnal *flânerie* actually entails. Master Humphrey's *flânerie* is not unlike Dickens's own *flânerie*, through which, as Chesterton famously said, he 'did not stamp these places [the London streets] on his mind; he stamped his mind on these places.'[75] According to De Certeau, the city, at ground-level, inevitably remains illegible and mysterious, and has to be apprehended through a rhetoric of walking because space cannot be captured in one sweeping gaze. Physical circulation across the city, with its associated mechanisms of dreams, memories and fables, is the key to unlocking the urban experience. This is precisely how Master Humphrey's writing functions. His physical and mental *flâneries* become inseparable, and his meanderings through London are reflected in his meandering prose.

Speculation, then, is at the heart of the text Master Humphrey is writing with his footsteps, it is the driving force behind his nocturnal strolls. He is perambulating through the city-streets in order to maximize the possibility of a story starting. He is desperate for a story, and his curiosity dominates the first chapter of the novel. Master Humphrey is reading and re-

[73] M. Hollington also points this out in his article 'Dickens the Flâneur', *Dickensian*, 77 (1981), 71-87, (p. 79).
[74] 'speculate, *v*.' OED.
[75] Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* [1906] (London: Wordsworth Edition Ltd, 2007), 24.

reading the city-space for a secret, for something hidden, and by reading and re-reading the London streets, he is effectively writing or re-writing London. His efforts pay off and he does stumble upon a 'curiosity' – Little Nell – and a story:

> One night I had roamed into the City, and was walking slowly on in my usual way, musing upon a great many things, when I was arrested by an inquiry, the purport of which did not reach me, but which seemed to be addressed to myself, and was preferred in a soft sweet voice that struck me very pleasantly. I turned hastily round and found at my elbow a pretty little girl, who begged to be directed to a certain street at a considerable distance, and indeed in quite another quarter of the town (OCS, 10).

The curiosity is reciprocal: 'I observed that every now and then she stole a curious look at my face, […] For my part, my curiosity and interest were at least equal to the child's' (OCS, 10). Master Humphrey is a *flâneur* 'speculating' on the characters and occupations of those who fill the streets'. He stresses his curiosity about the child and repeatedly emphasizes his ignorance 'I revolved in my mind a hundred different explanations of the riddle, and rejected them every one' (OCS, 11). Master Humphrey here is very much like the *flâneur* described in 'The Painter of Modern Life', for whom 'curiosity has become a compelling inaugural passion': 'La curiosité est devenue une passion fatale, irrésistible!'[76] Master Humphrey, 'walking or quickening his pace, goes his way, forever searching.'[77] His curiosity is such that it leads him to lose the child:

> There was no reason, however, why I should refrain from seeing the person who had inconsiderately sent her to so great a distance by night and alone, and as it was not improbable that if she found herself near home she might take farewell of me and deprive me of the opportunity, I avoided the most frequented ways and took the most intricate, and thus it was not until we arrived in the street itself that she knew where we were (OCS, 12).

Master Humphrey takes Nell, this new-found curiosity, through the street and leads her astray. He is trying to ward off the end of the tale, and rightly so. Indeed, his discovery of Nell and the beginning of her own story sounds the death knell of Master Humphrey and signals an impending shift in narration. After the first three chapters, Master Humphrey disappears. Then, the omniscient, Asmodeus-like narrator takes over. It has to be noted, however, that

[76] Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', *OC*, vol. 2, 690.
[77] Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', *OC*, vol. 2, 694. 'Ainsi il va, il court, il cherche.'

Dickens initially planned *Master Humphrey's Clock* as a framing device for a longer-running periodical, and so we ought not be surprised that *The Old Curiosity Shop* drops Master Humphrey into the background after the opening chapters, or that the perspective in some ways approximates the plan for *The Shadow* who would oversee his next periodical, *Household Words*. Indeed, the development of the story into a fully-fledged tale was closely linked to its publication history:

> Published as a weekly serial in *Master Humphrey's Cloc*k, *The Old Curiosity Shop* was initially conceived as nothing more than a sketch, in a single issue of the miscellany. […] The periodical proved both unpopular and unprofitable, and Dickens therefore feared that its 'desultory character', as he put it in the Preface to the Cheap Edition of the novel in 1848, risked undermining his hitherto intimate relationship with his readers. So he extended and reshaped this story, developing Nell's narrative to the point at which it subsumed the weekly publication completely, and thereby saving it from financial collapse. Daringly, and a little desperately, Dickens also discarded his first person narrator.[78]

The explanation which Beaumont gives us here shows that the disappearance of Master Humphrey as a character is also very concretely rooted in the unprofitability of the periodical bearing his name. It also illustrates how Master Humphrey, the framing device, becomes dwarfed and absorbed by a more powerful machine, the tale itself (and the compelling omniscient voice which narrates it).

Several critics have argued that 'Dickens's career shows a general movement away from personification toward […] distant, controlling omniscience.'[79] Jonathan Taylor finds that *The Old Curiosity Shop* illustrates this shift particularly well:

> *The Old Curiosity Shop* seems to stand on the cusp of this change, enacting the transition within its very structure. […] Once Master Humphrey has served his purpose and introduced Nell and other major characters, he retires from the scene. Then, objective, third-person narration which looks forward to the omniscience of later Victorian fiction.[80]

[78] Matthew Beaumont, 'The Mystery of Master Humphrey: Dickens, Nightwalking and *The Old Curiosity Shop*,' *Review of English Studies*, vol. 64, issue 264 (April 2013), 8. <10.1093/res/hgt031>.
[79] Jonathan Taylor, *Science and Omniscience in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Sussex Academic Press, 2007), 150.
[80] Taylor, *Science and Omniscience in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 149.

Interestingly, in chapter 33, the narrator mentions Asmodeus. It is as if the text was pointing to its own omniscience, or desire for omniscience, in a metatextual gesture:

> The historian takes the friendly reader by the hand, and springing with him into the air, and cleaving the same at a greater rate than ever Don Cleophas Leandro Perez Zambullo and his familiar travelled through that pleasant region in company, alights with him upon the pavement of Bevis Marks. The intrepid aeronauts alight before a small dark house, once the residence of Mr Sampson Brass (OCS, 250).

Dickens also mentions Asmodeus in *Dombey & Son*, where he compares the tale to the dream of a 'good spirit': 'Oh for a good spirit who would take the house-tops off, with a more potent and benignant hand than the lame demon in the tale, and show a Christian people what dark shapes issue from amidst their homes, to swell the retinue of the Destroying Angel as he moves forth among them!'[81] Omniscience, here, is more of a pleasant fancy, just as it is in the earlier-mentioned prospective title, *The Shadow*. It seems that the Asmodean ideal is only supposed to evoke the idea of absolute omniscience. Indeed, absolute omniscience remained undesirable for Dickens, who was always wary of the idea:

> Dickens and his staff frequently used [omniscient] characters, suggesting – in a tone of uneasy mockery – the modern thirst for data: the need of bureaucracy or business or science to know all about the human hive, down to the last organizational nuance. These omniscient figures embody the comprehensiveness of the economic and political systems which have grown up around society and which are most conspicuous in an urban center like London. "Authority" of this sort is seldom sympathetic. The very idea of omniscience is difficult to associate with human feeling.[82]

Hillis Miller claims that the term 'omniscient narrator' is misleading, and this narrator is not quite omniscient. Like Master Humphrey, the Asmodean narrator of *The Old Curiosity Shop* speculates about his characters:

> When Dickens, Eliot and Trollope… enter into the role of the personage who tells the story they do not take up a position outside the world of the novel… They identify themselves with a human awareness which is everywhere… within the world of the novel. The third-person narrator of *The Old Curiosity Shop* is

[81] Dickens, *Dombey and Son* [1846-48], ed. Andrew Sanders (London: Penguin Classics, 2002), 702.
[82] Richard Maxwell, 'Dickens's Omniscience', *ELH*, vol. 46, no. 2 (Summer, 1979), 290-313, (p. 292-3).

> representative of this trend: the narrator of chapter 33 places himself within the 'world of the novel', and identifies himself with a particular, personalised awareness – albeit, in his case, not a 'human' one.' [83]

What is fascinating in *The Old Curiosity Shop* is that the narrator is a curious blend between Asmodeus, the supernatural omnipotent devil who can see into people's homes, and Master Humphrey, the curious *flâneur* from the beginning of the tale, whose vision is partial and who speculates about his characters' future. The curious city of London is an inexhaustible source of curiosity which calls for the different gazes of Dickens's narrators. Like Nègre's daguerreotype, *The Old Curiosity Shop* captures, in the novel-form, the ever-changing nature of the *flâneur*'s gaze over the city.

Considering Asmodeus alongside the *flâneur* highlights the hybrid and protean nature of both these gazing figures. During the nineteenth century, however, the age-old figure of Asmodeus receded in the background while the *flâneur* internalized the powers of the shape-shifting devil and became the undisputed observer of urban life both in Paris and London. I have shown that his cross-Channel existence reinforced his adaptability and Proteanism. The superiority of this unobtrusive observer may have lain in the fact that the experience of the *flâneur* is one which individuals could easily identify with. Becoming engulfed in the 'bath of multitude' had become a familiar experience, and the *flâneur*, like many urban dwellers, could go unnoticed as he merged into the crowd and become 'a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye.'[84] Woolf's metaphor of the eye, which will be central to my analysis of the *flâneur*, is useful to understand the nature of his gaze. One could indeed compare the *flâneur* to an invisible eye which can accommodate, and accommodate to, the city environment. As I have demonstrated, the *flâneur* constantly 'adapt[s] or adjust[s himself] to new or different conditions,' and is intrinsically 'flexible.'[85] But as I stated earlier, the word accommodation also designates 'the ability to focus on objects at different distances from the eye; the process of doing this, typically involving changes in the shape or position of the lens of the eye.'[86] The *flâneur*'s freedom of movement endows him with the power to

[83] Joseph Hillis Miller, *The Form of Victorian Fiction: Thackeray, Dickens, Trollope, George Eliot, Meredith, and Hardy* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 64.
[84] Woolf, 'Street Haunting', 178.
[85] 'accommodate, *v.*' OED.
[86] 'accommodation, *n.*' OED.

change focus and to draw near or distance himself from the scenes he observes, which might be why novelists and poets alike favour his mode of gazing. But the *flâneur* is not only an 'eye' roaming through the city, he is not only 'pure vision,' he is also part of a discourse which makes the city intelligible and which makes up visuality, as Bryson explains:

> When I look, what I see is not only light but intelligible form. […] For human beings collectively to orchestrate their visual experience together it is required that each submit his or her retinal experience to the socially agreed descriptions(s) of an intelligible world. Vision is socialized, and thereafter deviation from this social construction of visual reality can be measured and named, variously, as hallucination, misrecognition, or 'visual disturbance.' Between the subject and the world is inserted the entire sum of discourses which make up visuality, that cultural construct, and make visuality different from vision, the notion of unmediated visual experience. Between retina and world is inserted a screen of signs, a screen consisting of all the multiple discourses on vision built into the social arena.[87]

The *flâneur* thus plays a crucial role in the distribution of the visible. He transmits the visual norms which make up visuality but also sometimes redefines them. As Jacques Rancière points out, the policing of the boundaries of culture, its distribution, relies on these barriers and breaches.[88] Following Bryson, one might say that the flâneurial gaze is part of a discourse which attempts to accommodate the experience of the city, to 'harmonize it and make it consistent,'[89] and thereby, to make it apprehensible. The idea of accommodation implies that the rise of the *flâneur* was closely linked to the profound changes which affected the city. It suggests that the eye of the *flâneur* was what this new city needed to be processed and to come to us readers – to become visible. Following on from this idea, the next chapter will probe the links between the *flâneur* and the city's new optical technologies and examine the influence they exerted on one another.

[87] Norman Bryson, 'The Gaze in the Expanded Field', in Hal Foster (ed.), *Vision and Visuality* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), 91-2.
[88] See Jacques Rancière, *Le Partage du sensible: Esthétique et politique* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2000*). The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, ed. and trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004).
[89] 'accommodate, *v.*: 4. To bring into harmony. To harmonize, make consistent.' OED.

Chapter 3. *Ways of Seeing*: Paris and London's Optical Technologies

> La volonté de voir la ville a précédé les moyens de la satisfaire. Les peintures médiévales ou renaissantes figuraient la cité vue en perspective par un œil qui pourtant n'avait encore jamais existé. Elles inventaient à la fois le survol de la ville et le panorama qu'il rendait possible. Cette fiction muait déjà le spectateur médiéval en œil céleste. Elle faisait des dieux. En va-t-il différemment depuis que des procédures techniques ont organisé un 'pouvoir omniregardant'? L'œil totalisant imaginé par les peintres d'antan survit dans nos réalisations. La même pulsion scopique hante les usagers des productions architecturales en matérialisant aujourd'hui l'utopie qui hier n'était que peinte.[1]

As Michel de Certeau points out, the scopic dream has existed since men 'created gods' – or devils. However, it is only quite recently, namely in the nineteenth century, that technologies and architecture materialized this utopia – or Asmodean dream. Panoramic vision was truly enacted for the first time with the invention of ballooning and experienced *en masse* with the multiplication of panoramas, which materialized the fiction of a celestial eye taking in the entire city. The *flâneur*'s viewpoint, showing the city at street-level, was also abundantly represented in the increasingly rapidly-produced sketches which printing presses constantly issued forth. Visual technologies thus picked up on, adapted and updated both the Asmodean and flâneurial ways of looking at the city. These technologies were also elaborated on the mechanization of seeing – they were, in a way, mechanical extensions of the eye. Their ubiquitous presence in the nineteenth-century cityscape made representations of the city possible and accessible to an unprecedented degree.

[1] Michel de Certeau, 'Marches dans la ville', in *L'Invention du quotidien; arts de faire 1* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 140-141. 'The desire to see the city preceded the means of satisfying it. Medieval or Renaissance painter represented the city as seen in a perspective that no eye had yet enjoyed. This fiction already made the medieval spectator into a celestial eye. It created gods. Have things changed since technical procedures have organized an "all-seeing power?" The totalizing eye imagined by the painters of earlier times lives on in our achievements. The same scopic drive haunts users of architectural productions by materializing today the utopia that yesterday was only painted. The 1370 foot high tower that serves as a prow for Manhattan continues to construct the fiction that creates readers, makes the complexity of the city readable, and immobilizes its opaque mobility in a transparent text.' (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, vol. 1, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 92.)

In this chapter, I would like to explore how these visual technologies reshaped the ways people perceived and gazed at the city, and how these influenced the reformulations of the figure of the *flâneur* across the century. Indeed, the gaze of the *flâneur* evolved with and alongside these new technologies, and the fact that he absorbed these changes reinforced his protean qualities. I will also suggest that one of the roles of the *flâneur* was to mediate the numerous changes which affected the city. He was the eye the city needed in order to process and apprehend the changes in its spaces, speeds and technologies. There was thus an interesting reciprocity between the evolution of cityscapes and that of the *flâneur*.

The advent of this new *flâneurial* way of seeing the city was thus very concretely rooted in material culture, and more precisely, in the uninterrupted technological exchanges which took place between Paris and London from the dawn of the new century. Walter Benjamin links the rise of panoramas in Paris to the rise of a different form of urban sensibility. But what he fails to acknowledge is that panoramas were invented and pioneered in Britain before being exported to Paris, while other technologies, like the daguerreotype, were developed in Paris before being exported to Britain. Technological innovations were produced at a particularly fast pace in London, but the cross-Channel exchanges between Paris and London meant that the 'technologies of seeing' invented and popularized in London quickly appeared in Paris, and vice versa. Indeed, in the field of technologies like in that of print, the exchanges between both capitals were constant. To be able to examine in detail how these changes in perception were played out, my focus will be mainly on London. However, one must bear in mind that similar changes were going on in Paris and other cities, which constituted the extended field in which the *flâneur* developed.

The first half of the nineteenth century saw an exponential growth of the visual entertainment industry – optical shows were packed with large crowds of Victorians eager to see the newest inventions or try the latest gadgets. According to Jonathan Crary,[2] there was an integral reorganisation of vision in the nineteenth century, an upheaval which created a new model of the observer, which materialized in a number of new aesthetic, cultural, and scientific practices. Various new optical devices were invented, and according to him, this

[2] See Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer. On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA and London: October Books, MIT Press, 1992).

signalled a sea change in ideas of seeing which was crucial to the construction of modernity. As stated earlier, this chapter will concentrate on two of these modern media – sketches and panoramas. The word panorama now designates any pictorial representation of a far-reaching, all-encompassing view, but originally, the word panorama referred to a very specific invention patented at the end of the eighteenth century. The invention was an instant success, and panoramas remained hugely popular throughout European cities until the 1860s:

> A panorama is a building in which a painting referred to as a *panorama* is exhibited, that is to say painted on the inside wall of a rotunda, covered by a cupola or cone-shaped roof. These paintings are faithful reproductions of what a place looks like when viewed from angles and from as far as the eye can see. To that end, the spectator is placed on a platform or circular gallery that simulates a tower and that is located at the centre of the rotunda; the light flows in from above, through an area of frosted glass fitted to the lower part of the roof so that it falls onto the painting. A huge parasol, suspended from the timbers above the platform, which is greater in diameter, keeps the spectator in the dark and at the same time conceals the source of light.[3]

The word itself referred to both these circular painted canvases, and to the building which contained them, while the expression 'going to a panorama' came to designate the whole sensory experience which these spectacular shows offered. From the outset then, the word 'panorama' appeared as a malleable term which could apply to a building, a painting, and a mode of viewing or experience. Sketches had of course been in circulation for centuries, but the number of visual and verbal sketches soared dramatically in the nineteenth century. The Oxford English Dictionary defines both kinds of sketches as follows:

> 1. A rough drawing or delineation of something, giving the outlines or prominent features without the detail, especially one intended to serve as the basis of a more finished picture, or to be used in its composition; a rough draught or design. Also, in later use, a drawing or painting of a slight or unpretentious nature.
>
> 2. A brief account, description, or narrative giving the main or important facts, incidents, etc., and not going into the details; a short or superficial essay or study, freq. in *pl.* as a title.[4]

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[3] *Dictionary of Building Terms, vol. III* (Paris, 1881-2), quoted in Bernard Comment, *The Panorama*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 7.
[4] 'sketch, *n.*' OED.

The fact that the word 'sketch' refers to both verbal and visual forms, is interesting in itself. There are many literary descriptions which could be likened to panoramas, but they are not linked to a specific form. The visual and verbal nature of sketches might hint at the fact that the sketcher – or *flâneur* – is in an ideal position to be the eye which translates the urban experience into words. This section will explore this idea by primarily considering engravings and etchings which accompanied verbal – and flâneurial – sketches of urban life.

This chapter will also study the influence these new visual forms had on their contemporaries' 'ways of seeing.'[5] If the Victorians produced these new visual media on such a grand scale, these media must indubitably have also 'produced' the Victorians. Susan R. Horton has judiciously remarked that 'Victorians were paying to see the world differently and to experience the joys of spectatorship; and what they were paying for was undoubtedly changing them.'[6] Moreover, these canvases and prints involved not only the industry which produced them and those who sold them, 'but also the mental machinery […] which spectators accustomed to [it] have internalized historically and which has adapted them to the consumption of the images produced by it.'[7] The purpose of this section will thus be to explore how sketches and panoramas shaped modes of seeing, perceiving, and experiencing the nineteenth-century city, but also to examine how they affected the construction of the *flâneur* as an urban observer.

This chapter will start by focusing on the seemingly antithetical nature of sketches and panoramas and on the fact that they require very different methods to be visualized and apprehended by the public. At first sight, the flâneurial viewpoint seems to be closer to that of the sketch-artist and completely poles apart from that of the panoramist. However, what connects these two forms is that they are both attempts to represent and comprehend the rapidly changing city. The second part of this study will concentrate on the ways in which panoramas and sketches attempted to make this fast-paced city intelligible. The *flâneur* appeared to be the literary embodiment of this desire for legibility. The final part of this

[5] See John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972). *Ways of Seeing* examines hidden ideologies in visual images, and is seen as an influential text in the field of visual culture studies.
[6] Susan R. Horton, 'Were they Having Fun Yet? Victorian Optical Gadgetry, Modernist Selves', in Carol T. Christ, John O. Jordan (eds.), *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 13.
[7] Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 7.

analysis will address the central question of mobility in relation to these new modes of representation. These constantly evolving technologies influenced the modes of perception of the public and the construction of the *flâneur*. I will show that the *flâneur* came to illustrate the dialectical culture of seeing that moved between the panorama and the sketch. He opened up the differences between them, which made him the quintessential figure of urban exploration in the nineteenth century. The *flâneur* took these new technologies in his stride and these new techniques of observation became integrated into his makeup, which, again, points to his remarkable adaptability.

I. Sketches and panoramas: opposing modes of apprehending the city?

Panoramas and sketches seem to be two thoroughly opposed ways of seeing and envisaging the city. While the panorama offers a clear and full bird's-eye-view of the city, the sketch gives us an incomplete and partial view of the city. Moreover, the panorama seems to offer a contemplative experience, reminiscent of Nietzsche's Apollonian order, while the sketch plunges us into the maze of the city, thus conveying the sense of loss and speed which epitomizes the Dionysian urban experience. Finally, the panorama is an extremely precise and detailed painting, while one of the sketch's main characteristic is to be fragmentary and swiftly outlined. Whilst the *flâneur* seems most closely identified with the sketch-artist, the discussion will reveal that in fact, the *flâneur* depends on both ways of seeing.

1. Bird's-eye view and street-level

The panoptic aerial viewpoint of the map-maker described by De Certeau, which renders the city legible, is akin to that of the panorama artist, while his description of the walker's perception of space at ground-level resembles that of the sketch-artist. Let us examine in detail how these two different modes of perception of the city can be related to sketches and panoramas.

Let us first look at the way sketches function. As stated in the introduction, the word 'sketch' evokes a rough delineation, a draft, a preliminary study. Interestingly, this term applies both to the visual and the verbal mode. Both visual and verbal sketches were

extremely popular at the time, and were very often combined in publications. Sketches were a constant feature in newspapers such as the *Illustrated London News* or *Punch*. Dickens's *Sketches By Boz* were illustrated by Cruikshank's sketches, his *Pickwick Papers* by Phiz's, while Thackeray's *Vanity Fair: Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society* was illustrated by the author's own illustrations and vignettes. The word 'sketch' enabled the writer or artist to slip on the guise of the amateur, hence suppressing all evidence of effort and justifying the incompleteness or flaws of their productions – and perhaps even taking pleasure in the incompletion and hastiness of their productions. As Alison Byerly pointed out, the 'use of the term hinged on its primary artistic meaning: a rapidly drawn picture that sacrifices aesthetic finish for a sense of spontaneity. The sketch embraces a certain ease or even disdain; the artist could draw a detailed portrait if he wished, but chooses to give a rapid impression of certain elements of the scene rather than elaborate them into a complete picture.'[8] The word 'sketch' thus implied that it offered scenes on which the artist had alighted by chance, and which were drawn out spontaneously, as the sketcher walked about the streets of the capital. This sense of the accidental is a defining feature of sketches. In *Sketches By Boz*, the narrator often just happens upon the scene or character he subsequently depicts: 'Chance threw the man in our way a short time since' (SBB, 'The Broker's Man', 43). 'We will endeavour to sketch the bar of a large gin-shop [...] on the chance of finding one well-suited to our purpose, we will make for Drury Lane, through the narrow streets and dirty courts which divide it from Oxford-street' ('Gin Shops', SBB, 217). 'We had turned into the street, and run up against a door-post, before we recollected where we were walking. On looking upwards to see what house we had stumbled upon, the words "Prerogative-Office," written in large characters, met our eye; and as we were in a sight-seeing humour and the place was a public one, we walked in' ('Doctor's Commons', SBB, 113). Thus, sketches seem to offer only partial and arbitrary insights into the life of the capital. In his essay 'The Painter of Modern Life,' Baudelaire explicitly makes the link between the walker and the sketch-artist. According to him, the sketcher, being a *flâneur*, is perfectly at ease in the midst of an urban crowd and is in an ideal position to delineate the 'enthusiastic life' of the street:

> La foule est son domaine, comme l'air est celui de l'oiseau, comme l'eau celui du poisson. Sa passion et sa profession, c'est d'épouser la foule. Pour le parfait flâneur, pour l'observateur passionné, c'est une immense jouissance que d'élire

[8] Alison Byerly, 'Effortless Art: The Sketch in Nineteenth-Century Painting and Literature', *Criticism*, 41, 3 (Summer 1999), 349–64, (p. 349).

> domicile dans le nombre, dans l'ondoyant dans le mouvement, dans le fugitif et l'infini. […]
>
> Maintenant, à l'heure où les autres dorment, celui-ci est penché sur sa table, dardant sur une feuille de papier le même regard qu'il attachait tout à l'heure sur les choses, s'escrimant avec son crayon, sa plume, son pinceau, faisant jaillir l'eau du verre au plafond, essuyant sa plume sur sa chemise, pressé, violent, actif, comme s'il craignait que les images ne lui échappent, querelleur quoique seul, et se bousculant lui-même. Et les choses renaissent sur le papier, naturelles et plus que naturelles, belles et plus que belles, singulières et douées d'une vie enthousiaste comme l'âme de l'auteur ![9]

Baudelaire's vision of the sketcher of the city corresponds to that of Michel de Certeau's urban walker. According to him, the perception of the walker at ground-level is intrinsically partial and fragmented – the everyday space of the street resists and rejects the rational and geometric organisation of the city provided by the cartographer. Space remains disorganised and undisciplined. De Certeau even goes as far as to say that the urban experience is characterized by blindness: '[Le corps des marcheurs] obéit aux pleins et aux déliés d'un "texte" urbain qu'ils écrivent sans pouvoir le lire. Ces praticiens jouent des espaces qui ne se voient pas. […] Tout se passe comme si un aveuglement caractérisait les pratiques organisatrices de la ville habitée.'[10] Interestingly, this image of blindness is very present in nineteenth-century descriptions of the city. Victorian writers insisted on the experience of disorientation inevitably produced by their maze-like capital. An anonymous writer in *Temple Bar* described his experience of passage through London in 1862 as such:

> Most of the streets are narrow, crooked, and running in every possible direction. I am not deficient in locality, and can find my way in pathless forests; but I have

[9] Charles Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne' in Claude Pichois (ed.), *Charles Baudelaire, Œuvres Complètes* (*OC*), 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Collection 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade', 1975), vol. 2, 691-692.
'The crowd is his element, as the air is that of birds and water of fishes. His passion and his profession are to become one flesh with the crowd. For the perfect flaneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. […] So now, at a time when others are asleep, Monsieur G. is bending over his table, darting on to a sheet of paper the same glance that a moment ago he was directing towards external things, skirmishing with his pencil, his pen, his brush, splashing his glass of water up to the ceiling, wiping his pen on his shirt, in a ferment of violent activity, as though afraid that the image might escape him, cantankerous though alone, elbowing himself on. And the external world is reborn upon his paper, natural and more than natural, beautiful and more than beautiful, strange and endowed with an impulsive life like the soul of its creator.' (*The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (New York: Phaidon Press, 1995), 12.)

[10] De Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien*, 141-142. '[The bodies of urban walkers] follow the thicks and thins of the urban "text" they write without being able to read it. […] It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness.' (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, 93).

> tried to walk a mile in one direction through the maze of London, and after half an hour found myself forty rods on the wrong side of the place of beginning.[11]

For De Certeau, it is this lack of legibility and visibility which makes the walker's trajectory haphazard. The walker cannot but fragment the urban space with his meandering footsteps:

> L'*asyndète* est suppression des mots de liaison, conjonctions et adverbes, dans une phrase ou entre des phrases. De même, dans la marche, elle sélectionne et fragmente l'espace parcouru; elle en saute les liaisons et des parts entières qu'elle omet. De ce point de vue, toute marche continue à sauter, ou à sautiller, comme l'enfant, 'à cloche pied.' Elle pratique l'ellipse des lieux conjonctifs. […] Par ces boursouflures, amenuisements et fragmentations, travail rhétorique, se crée un phrasé spatiale de type anthologique (composé de citations juxtaposées) et elliptique (fait de trous, de lapsus et d'allusions).[12]

If we follow De Certeau, the sketch's fragmented and 'haphazard' nature could thus be partly explained by the sketcher's position as a walker at street level, always necessarily immersed in the city.

Let us now turn to the panorama, which was invented in 1787 by a Scotsman, Robert Barker. Panoramas were circular canvases of gigantic proportions inserted in purpose-built rotundas. Barker's idea was to sketch segments of an entire 360° view in an unbroken sequence, and his great invention was to solve the problem which arose from circularity (which would make horizontal lines look curved when flat drawings were hung in a circle), 'by inventing a system of curved lines which would neutralize the distortion created by a concave surface.'[13] It usually depicted spectacular or sublime views of landscapes or cityscapes, but for the purpose of this study, we shall focus on panoramas of London only. Interestingly, Barker's first name for his invention was 'La Nature à Coup d'Œil', as the

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[11] 'London, As It Strikes a Stranger', *Temple Bar*, 5 (June 1862), 382, quoted in Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-century London* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 3.

[12] De Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien*, 153.
'*Asyndeton* is the suppression of linking words such as conjunctions and adverbs, either within a sentence or between sentences. In the same way, in walking it selects and fragments the space traversed; it skips over links and whole parts that it omits. From this point of view, every walk constantly leaps, or skips like a child, hopping on one foot. It practices the ellipsis of conjunctive *loci*. […] Through these swellings, shrinkings, and fragmentations, that, through these rhetorical operations a spatial phrasing of an analogical (composed of juxtaposed citations) and elliptical (made of gaps, lapses, and allusions) type is created.' (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, 101-102).

[13] Richard Daniel Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1978), 129.

patent he obtained for it on 19 June 1787 demonstrates. However, the word 'panorama' quickly replaced it. The etymology of the word panorama translates from the Greek as 'all-embracing view,' and as Richard Altick points out, 'the speed with which the word […] entered the common vocabulary and acquired applications far removed from Barker's circular picture testifies […] to the fact that the word filled a need that was not met by such older words as "prospect."'[14] It also points to the fact that the Victorians were fascinated with the idea of totalizing vision (another name for this invention was *cyclorama*, which highlights the desire for a 360°, all-encompassing vista). Barker decided to take his invention to London and to do so, acquired a site on the East side of Leicester Place, on which he erected a circular building expressly built to receive his grandiose panoramas. This building, which opened in 1794, remained at the centre of London's entertainment industry over the next sixty years. In 1790-91, he had sent his son to the roof of the highest landmark in central London, 'the Albion sugar mills at the Southwark end of Blackfriars Bridge, to sketch as much as he could see from that vantage point.'[15] This choice of subject proved to be immensely popular. When Barker's patent expired, panoramas appeared all over the country (and Europe) and they rapidly became the Victorian public's favourite mode of entertainment. One of the earliest copies of Barker's invention was the watercolorist Thomas Girtin's *Eidometropolis*, which appeared at Wigley's Great Room at Spring Gardens in 1802, one year after Barker's exclusive license for the panorama expired. This immense panorama of London, which was 18 feet high and 108 feet in circumference, turned out to be a tremendous success.[16] James Chandler indicates that 'Girtin's Great London Panorama (as it was also called) offered its many spectators a 360-degree view of London at the turn of the century from an imagined point of vantage atop the British Plate Glass Manufactory at the south end of Blackfriars Bridge.'[17] The fact that mills and factories provided viewpoints and points of leisure for panoramas shows that the rise of panoramas was intrinsically linked to the way the industrial revolution reshaped the cityscape. Representing the changes which affected the city was the main ambition of the first panoramas. Interestingly, Chandler contends that through its name and etymology (Eidos meaning image or shape in Greek), Girtin links his *Eidometropolis* to

[14] Altick, *The Shows of London*, 132.
[15] Altick, *The Shows of London*, 132.
[16] 'Girtin, Thomas (1775–1802)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004). <http://www.oxforddnb.com.rproxy.sc.univ-paris-diderot.fr/view/article/10777> [accessed 12/09/2010]
[17] James Chandler, Kevin Gilmartin (eds), *Romantic Metropolis: The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780-1840* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), 8.

P. J. De Loutherbourg's *Eidophusikon*, another popular invention which had been exhibited in the same venue a few years before. 'The *Eidophusikon* (or "Representation of Nature", as it was subtitled) was an apparatus that promised the most life-like possible representation of the world by means of an array of technical devices working together in a proscenium frame that was roughly 6 feet high, 10 feet wide, and 8 feet deep.'[18] Loutherbourg's invention represented both nature and the city, in an attempt, perhaps, to represent the world in its totality. This is particularly interesting because as I will go on to explain, around the same period, Wordsworth followed the same method in applying the totalizing gaze of the of the Romantic writer of nature to the city in his poem 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802.'[19]

This extraordinary interest for all-encompassing views of the city ties in with Michel de Certeau's text about the legibility of the city from high up. As De Certeau indicates, bird's-eye views tend to immobilize individual elements, whereas close-ups or sketches teem with life and details. Interestingly, eighteenth-century observers, many of whom followed the vogue for picturesque travel, had already noted that phenomenon: 'In travel accounts it became a topos to contrast the panoramic view taken from a summit with the disconnected and incomplete sensations of displacement experienced on the ground.'[20] Thus, the panoramists who depicted London, adopting the gaze of map-makers or city-planners, seemed to render London legible. The most popular of all London panoramas was probably that of the artist Thomas Hornor, exhibited at the Colosseum and representing a view of London seen from the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral. In 1821, repairs in St Paul's cathedral were undertaken, and Thomas Hornor 'recognized a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make a complete graphic record of all that could be discerned from the top of St Paul's. […] Hornor slowly sketched his way around a complete circle.'[21] One might say that the Victorians' 'scopic and Gnostic drive' revealed itself through the immense popularity of Hornor's panorama.

[18] Chandler, *Romantic Metropolis*, 9.
[19] William Wordsworth, 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802', in Stephen Gill (ed.), *William Wordsworth, The Major Works* (Oxford, New York: OUP, 2000), 285.
[20] Comment, *The Panorama*, 111.
[21] Altick, *The Shows of London*, 142.

2. The Apollonian and the Dionysian

Let us now focus on the position of the observer in the sketch and in the panorama. The two radically different takes on the city of the panorama-painter and of the sketcher can be likened to Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian principles, which he first described in *The Birth of Tragedy* [1872], and which he respectively linked to the arts of sculpture and music: 'In the Greek world there existed a sharp opposition, in origin and aims, between the Apollonian art of sculpture, and the non-plastic, Dionysian art of music.'[22] I would like to show that although there are differences between these forms of art and the two media I am focusing on in the present study, the panorama can in many ways be likened to the art of sculpture, while the sketch can be put alongside the art of music.

From his elevated position, the panorama painter seems to be able to experience the city in a contemplative manner. The *aestheticizing* distance of the panoramist's gaze is reminiscent of Nietzsche's Apollonian principle. The Apollonian in culture is akin to Arthur Schopenhauer's concept of the *principium individuationis*[23] (principle of individuation) which rests on an emphasis on superficial appearance, through which man distances himself from the undifferentiated immediacy of nature. According to Nietzsche, the art of sculpture encapsulates this principle most fully, because of its clear boundaries and everlasting stability. One might contend that the Apollonian principle also underlies the work of the panorama-artist who freezes the rushing of people and things, and transforms the chaos of the streets into a reassuringly orderly composition. Some of the principles which are inherent to the Apollonian order are self-control, rationality, order, culture, visual arts and the celebration of appearance. Hornor's panorama was celebrated because the view from St. Paul's cupola was hailed in both art and literature as the most beautiful viewpoint of London. Many writers on London took it as their starting-point. Christopher Wood gives the example of D.J. Kirwan, author of *Palace and Hovel* (1870), who wrote: 'In the civilized world perhaps such another sight cannot be witnessed, as that which greets the eye from the great cupola of Saint Paul's, when the view is taken on a bright summer morning.'"[24] The clarity of this panorama had

[22] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* [1872], trans. Clifton P. Fadiman (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995), 1.
[23] See Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (1818, 2nd ed. 1844).
[24] Christopher Wood, *Victorian Panorama, Paintings of Victorian Life* (London: Farber and Farber Limited, 1976), 144.

such a lasting impact on Londoners that when he ascended to the top of Saint Paul's dome, forty years later in 1868, a contributor to *All the Year Round*:

> My first impression is that I have been here before. The panoramas and great pictures of bird's-eye views from St. Paul's are so wonderfully like reality, that any one seeing them may rest satisfied without enlarging his experience." Indeed, suggests the official custodian of this view, "you might come here twenty times without getting the right sort of day, even in summer, before the fires are lit." The artificial panorama is most likely better than the real thing![25]

Panoramas can be associated with grand topographic views of the city which proliferated in nineteenth-century illustrations of London, which originated in eighteenth-century representations of European cities after the manner of Canaletto, and of which Donald J. Gray gave an interesting description:

> Views of the city characteristically depict its public buildings, churches, parks, principal thoroughfares, and often, in an opening or summary plate, a panorama of the city seen from the vantage of Greenwich, Hampstead, or the river. The effect of these city views is typically one of order and firm composition. Buildings dominate the scene, their line and elevations providing its perspectives. The carefully blocked masses and detailed surfaces are seen in a clear atmosphere and even light.[26]

This description falls under Nietzsche's Apollonian principles, since carved stone buildings epitomize order, culture and stability in those pictorial representations of the city. Baudelaire's poem 'Rêve parisien' conveys the fixity of the panoramic gaze admirably: 'Et, peintre fier de mon génie, / Je savourais dans mon tableau / L'enivrante monotonie / Du métal, du marbre et de l'eau.'[27] Baudelaire takes on the guise of the landscape artist and 'bans from that spectacle Irregular vegetation' to paint a petrified, truly Apollonian landscape, a 'Babel of arcades and stairways' with 'ramparts of metal' and 'enclosed Motionless lakes.' As far as order is concerned, Deborah Epstein Nord aptly compared the panoramic mode to Foucault's work on Jeremy Bentham's panoptic mode of vision. In Foucault's description, the

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[25] 'All Round St. Paul's', *All the Year Round*, 19 (4 April 1868), 392, quoted in Richard Maxwell, 'Dickens's Omniscience', *ELH*, 46, 2 (Summer, 1979), 290-313, (p. 292).

[26] Donald J. Gray, "Views and Sketches of London in the Nineteenth Century", in Ira Bruce Nadel, F.S. Schwartzbach (eds.), *Victorian* (eds.), *Victorian Artists and the City* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980), 43.

[27] Baudelaire, 'Rêve parisien', *Les Fleurs du mal*, *OC*, vol. 1, 101. 'A painter, in my genius free, I there exulted in the fettle Derived from a monotony Composed of marble, lymph, and metal.' (Roy Campbell (trans.), *Poems of Baudelaire* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1952), 137.)

panopticon affords the surveyor or spectator both a panoramic view of the whole prison scene and the ability to scrutinize individual prisoners isolated in their cells.

> As the sketch of the urban type separates the potentially dangerous or unsettling face from the crowd in order to tame it and defuse its mystery, so the Panopticon abolishes, in Foucault's words, 'a compact mass, a locus of multiple exchanges, individualities merging together, a collective effect,' and replaces it with a 'collection of separated individualities.' Whether viewed from afar, atop the dome of St Paul's or Primrose Hill, or at close range as in isolated encounters or images, the city's disruptive nature, like the prisoner's, is muted and controlled.[28]

Order is of course one of the overarching principles of the Apollonian order. If we turn to literature, one of the most well-known examples of this panoramic mode of viewing the city is probably Wordsworth's poem, 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802.' Interestingly, Chandler also singled out this poem as one which adapts the panoramic mode, and noted that the poem 'was composed in a stay that coincides exactly with the exhibition of Girtin's monumental watercolour panorama at Spring Gardens,'[29] and he interprets the poem as a response to Girtin's creation. He sees in the first verse of the poem ('Earth has not anything to show more fair') as a distant echo of the *Eidophusikon* (*physikon*: earth, *eido*: show), and to him, Wordsworth represents the metropolis in terms of landscape, thus creating a sense of the metropolitan sublime. 'The relation of *Eidometropolis* and *Eidophusikon* becomes another argument for the intimacy shared between Girtin's 1802 exhibition and Wordsworth's 1802 sonnet, for the sonnet seems to capture some of the same quality. The sonnet brings country and city side by side in the poem's panorama.'[30] This sense of the metropolitan sublime described by Chandler as stemming from the Romantic sentiment of landscape corresponds to the Apollonian order. Indeed, Wordsworth's poem shares many characteristics with the Apollonian vision of the panorama painter. Calm and order are of the essence here, since the poem's Petrarchan sonnet form, its general iambic rhythm, which culminates in the final iambic pentameter concluding the poem: 'And all that mighty heart is lying still!', and the astonishing stillness which characterize the city in this vision all concur in creating this powerful vision of orderliness. The calm and quiet regularity of the last iambic pentameter, the cross rhymes of the sestet, and the alliteration of [p] all concur to create a

[28] Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation and the City* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 25.
[29] Chandler, *Romantic Metropolis*, 11.
[30] Chandler, *Romantic Metropolis*, 12.

powerful evocation of the sound of the beating heart of the city, which is paradoxically most alive when it is asleep. The rhymes and rhythm of the sestet conjure up the image of a throbbing heart which distantly alludes to and contrasts with the sound of the city, that impending din and clamour which is about to grip the reposing city. Wordsworth's vision summons both our senses of sight and hearing; London is personified in both visual and aural registers. Yet, the vision is magnified, while the sound is muted – the Apollonian reigns supreme. The stability inherent to sculpture, hailed by Nietzsche, finds a powerful embodiment in the 'ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples [which] lie / Open unto the fields, and to the sky' (v.6-7), which celebrate human order and culture. This is a powerful epiphany, during which the true beauty of the city is suddenly revealed. Here, the words which modernist writer James Joyce used to describe the epiphanic moment come to mind: the city's 'soul, its whatness, leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance. The soul of the commonest object, the structure of which is so adjusted, seems to us radiant.'[31] This epiphanic moment, when the veil of the everyday is suddenly lifted from the surface of things, is aptly conveyed by the metaphor of the morning light – the 'bright and glittering in the smokeless air' creates a distinct image of the breathtaking clarity of the morning. Interestingly, if we come back to Hornor's panorama, this metaphor of the veil or the fog being lifted is most relevant, because Hornor could only sketch London at sunrise, before it became shrouded in smoke and soot, as many newspapers and London guidebooks reported at the time:

> That [Hornor] might overcome the difficulties which the smoke of the vast city ordinarily presented, he invariably commenced his labours immediately after sunrise, before the lighting of the innumerable fires which pour out their dark and sullen clouds during the day, and spread a mantle over this wide congregation of the dwellings of men, which only midnight can remove. On a fine summer morning, about four o'clock, London presents an extraordinary spectacle. The brilliancy of the atmosphere – the almost perfect stillness of the streets, except in the neighbourhood of the great markets – the few living beings that pass along those lines which in the day are crowded like some vast mart, such as the traveller hurrying to his distant starting-place, or the labourer creeping to his early work – all these circumstances make up a picture which forcibly impresses the imagination.

[31] James Joyce, *Stephen Hero* (New York: New Directions, 1959), 99.

> What the artist who sketched this panorama saw only in the earliest hours of a brilliant morning, the visitor of the Colosseum may behold in all seasons, and all hours of the day.[32]

Indeed, the thickness of the smog was such as to render any attempt at seeing London during the day virtually impossible, which probably fuelled the enthusiasm for this clear and all-encompassing representation of London. The dream of imposing order and beauty upon the imperfect city is at the heart of the panoramist's project. Interestingly, the metaphor of the veil is also used by Nietzsche, although in this case, the veil is not being lifted, quite the contrary – the Apollonian principle casts an aestheticizing veil over the dissonance of human existence: 'Then, that it might live, this dissonance would need a glorious illusion to cover its features with a veil of beauty. This is the true artistic function of Apollo.'[33] The Apollonian principles are thus at the core of panoramic representation, be it literary or artistic. It is a deeply contemplative experience, underlain by an aesthetic dream of fixity.

The sketcher, immersed as he is in the street and its crowds, sees the city in motion as he is moving through the city himself. The scenes which present themselves to him are characterized by their ephemerality, their sense of immediacy, and their chaotic nature. These elements seem to echo the Dionysian impulse, the prominent features of which are immediacy and the chaotic. It also features, among other things, absorption by the primal horde and re-immersion into a common organic whole, and hails human beings as the work and glorification of art. It is radically opposed to the detached, remote, and rational mode of Apollonian representation since it requires a frenetic participation in life. Nietzsche sees music as the art which embodies the Dionysian impulse most fully, since according to him, music has no clear boundaries and is essentially unstable, and invites its listeners to participate in its frenzy through dance. The literary or visual sketch aims at reproducing the brief encounter, the moment of viewing the urban scene, the crowd – life itself – and although one cannot equate dance and music with sketches, one might say that the sketch appears to originate in the Dionysian impulse. Let us first examine an example of London sketches which offers both verbal and visual material. Pierce Egan's 1821 *Life in London or the Day*

[32] Nathaniel Whittock, *The Modern Picture of London, Westminster and the Metropolitan Boroughs* (London: G. Virtue, 1836), 492-493.
[33] Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 91.

and night scenes of Jerry Hawthorn, Esq. and his elegant friend Corinthian Tom, accompanied by Bob Logic, the Oxonian, in their rambles and sprees through the metropolis[34] was an instant success. The Dionysian impulse, involving a frenzied participation in life, is very much part and parcel of Egan's extraordinarily popular work, which was steeped in London life, as J.C. Reid indicates. 'It was widely believed at the time that Tom, Jerry and Logic were modeled upon George, Robert [Cruikshank], and Pierce Egan, and indeed, the trio must have had experiences during their excursions through London which went into *The Life of London* stock-pot. Pierce Egan seems to have put a great deal of himself into Bob Logic.'[35] Egan relishes the contrasts and paradoxes of Life in London, which is one of the structuring principles of his work – Tom and Jerry go from All Max, a notoriously disreputable drinking place, to Almack's on the following night, the fashionable assembly room, from Covent Garden to gin-shops, from the Opera House to dog-fighting clubs. The frontispiece of *Life in London*, drawn by George and Robert Cruikshank, represents an architectural column, which shows various characters from the novel and the variety of life in London. The episodic form of Egan's work, composed of multiple sprees to different parts of towns, also testifies to the fragmented and chaotic nature of these sketches. There is no genuinely sustained story, only a series of discrete scenes strung together which reflect the turbulent and uncontrolled nature of London life.

If we now turn to Dickens's sketches, what is interesting is that they also centre on the Dionysian impulse for life and the process of change. The sketch 'The Streets – Morning' begins 'an hour before sunrise,' finishes at noon, and describes the numerous changes which affect one area of London within this short time span. This short piece reaches its climax at the end, when 'the streets are thronged with a vast concourse of people, gay and shabby, rich and poor, idle and industrious; and we come to the heat, bustle, and activity of NOON' (SBB, 74). The sketch is reminiscent of Hogarth's extremely popular series of paintings and engravings 'Four Times of the Day,' and exudes the sense of vibrancy.[36] The sketch is written

[34] Pierce Egan, *Life in London or the Day and night scenes of Jerry Hawthorn, Esq. and his elegant friend Corinthian Tom, accompanied by Bob Logic, the Oxonian, in their rambles and sprees through the metropolis, by Pierce Egan, with scenes designed and etched by I. R. and G. Cruikshank* (London: Sherwood, Jones and C°, 1823).

[35] J.C. Reid, *Bucks and Bruisers: Pierce Egan and Regency England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), 55.

[36] William Hogarth, *Four Times of the Day*, 'Morning', 'Noon', 'Evening', 'Night', oil on canvas, 1736; engraving & etching, 1738. For more details on the links between Hogarth and Dickens, see Paul Davis, 'Imaging Oliver Twist: Hogarth, Illustration and the Part of Darkness', *Dickensian* 82 (1986), pp. 158-76.

in the present tense, which preserves a sense of immediacy from beginning to end. What is amazing in this sketch is that it actually makes us experience the movement of city life, its progression:

> The last drunken man, who shall find his way home before sunlight, has just staggered heavily along' […] 'An hour wears away; the spires of the churches and roofs of the principal buildings are faintly tinged with the light of the rising sun; and the streets, by almost imperceptible degrees, begin to resume their bustle and animation.' […] 'Covent-garden market, and the avenues leading to it, are thronged with carts of all sorts, sizes, and descriptions, from the heavy lumbering waggon, with its four stout horses, to the jingling costermonger's cart, with its consumptive donkey. The pavement is already strewed with decayed cabbage-leaves, broken hay-bands, and all the indescribable litter of a vegetable market; men are shouting, carts backing, horses neighing, boys fighting, basket-women talking, piemen expatiating on the excellence of their pastry, and donkeys braying.' […] 'The shops are now completely opened, and apprentices and shopmen are busily engaged in cleaning and decking the windows for the day. The bakers' shops in town are filled with servants and children waiting for the drawing of the first batch of rolls—an operation which was performed a full hour ago in the suburbs: for the early clerk population of Somers and Camden towns, Islington, and Pentonville, are fast pouring into the city, or directing their steps towards Chancery-lane and the Inns of Court (SBB, 69-73).

Sounds in verbal sketches, and in this extract especially, are prominent – one can almost hear the steps of the drunken man 'stagger[ing] heavily along', and that of the 'clerk population […] pouring into the city' – carts 'jingle', 'men are shouting, […] horses neighing, boys fighting, basket-women talking, piemen expatiating on the excellence of their pastry, and donkeys braying.' This 'dissonant' street-activity, to use Nietzsche's words, this jubilant participation in the vibrant life of the city, is a Dionysian feature. Another very popular sketcher of London life was George Augustus Sala, who produced a combination of verbal and visual sketches, *Twice Round the Clock, or the Hours of the Day and Night in London* (1858), a collection of 24 sketches, one for each hour of the day. He too focused on life and the process of change, but his approach was different to that of Dickens, as Deborah Epstein Nord has pointed out: 'Sala's […] times-of-the-day sketches capture a variety of places each

at a single moment, rather than a single place or vantage point over a period of time.'[37] Whereas the panoramist's gaze introduces distance, the sketcher diminishes the distance between the observer and the city and plunges him at the heart of urban life. This Dionysian interest for the wholeness of existence, life and the chaotic nature of life is a distinctive feature of nineteenth-century London sketches.

Nietzsche's distinction between the Apollonian order and the Dionysian impulse are helpful in deciphering the principles which direct the composition of sketches and panorama. The fact that both visual and verbal discourses appropriated and adapted these two radically different modes of viewing the metropolis points to a real desire to represent and thereby, understand the changing city.

3. Totality and fragmentation

Let us now focus more closely on the nature of the depiction of these two modes of representation. While the panorama painter seems intent on achieving the most detailed, faithful and complete replica of the city, the sketcher, on the contrary, treasures the possibility offered by the rapidly drawn and fragmentary nature of the sketch.

Accuracy and totality seem to be constitutive features of panoramas. This dream of comprehensiveness seems to be encapsulated in this description of the ideal observer by Balzac, whose point of view should be that of a bird of prey: 'ces sublimes oiseaux de proie qui, tout en s'élevant à de hautes régions, possèdent le don de voir clair dans les choses d'ici-bas, qui peuvent tout à la fois abstraire et spécialiser, faire d'exactes analyses et de justes synthèses.'[38] For Balzac, the ideal observer should be able to see the most minute detail of the city but should also attain a synthetic, totalizing vision. In *La Comédie Humaine*, Balzac regularly depicts characters overlooking the city – thus enacting this all-seeing fantasy. The earlier-cited passage from *Le Père Goriot,* for instance, shows Rastignac adopting the panoramist's viewpoint as he casts a final gaze over the city. It captures in a single image the

[37] Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets*, 60.
[38] Honoré de Balzac, *Théorie de la démarche*, in Pierre-Georges Castex (ed.), *La Comédie humaine*, 12 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Collection 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade', 1976-1981), vol. 12 [1981], 260. 'These sublime birds of prey which, while soaring up to the highest regions, possess the ability to see clearly into what is here down below, which can oversee everything and focus in on details all at the same time, carry out precise analyses and correct syntheses.'

hero's struggles with the capital which the whole novel has chartered and explored. The panoramist enacts, in visual form, Balzac's dream of an all-encompassing, global vision. Interestingly, Wordsworth, in book VII of *The Prelude*, also referred to panoramas and underlined their immense scope and tremendous precision:

Whether the Painter, whose ambitious skill
Submits to nothing less than taking in
A whole horizon's circuit, do with power
Like that of angels or commissioned spirits,
Fix us upon some lofty pinnacle,
Or, as a ship on waters, with a world
Of life, and life-like mockery beneath,
Above, behind, far stretching and before;
Or more mechanic artist represent
By scale exact, in model, wood or clay,
From blended colours also borrowing help,
Some miniature of famous spots or things, –
St Peter's Church, or, more aspiring aim,
In microscopic vision, Rome itself […]
All that the traveller sees when he is there.[39]

The reference to 'angels or commissioned spirits' echoes De Certeau's insistence on the comprehensive, God-like vision of the map-maker, as does the enumeration of terms pointing to the all-inclusive nature of the panorama ('Above, behind, far stretching and before'). Indeed, Hornor, when atop the dome of St. Paul's, drew absolutely everything which this 360° view afforded, and thus acquired about two thousand sketches of London. They were used to create the most impressive and gigantic panorama ever seen in London, as Richard Altick tells us: '[His sketches served] as raw material for what he conceived was the climax, the *ne plus ultra* of the panoramic art: a permanent installation, the biggest in the world, designed to provide London showgoers with a facsimile of the view from St. Paul's. […] A group of speculators planned to build a magnificent palace-for-profit, dedicated to the more seemly pleasures of Regency society in the south-eastern corner of Regent's Park – the Colosseum.'[40] Not only could the spectators see London from a panoramic perspective, thus getting a 360°

[39] Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, book VII, v. 240-54; 259, *The Major Works*, 474-475.
[40] Altick, *Shows of London*, 142.

view of London, they could also walk around the building and observe details at a close range, and many accounts bear testimony to the incredible accuracy of the painting seen at close quarters. Richard Altick described in a very explicit way how the building was set up:

> But the supreme experience at the Colosseum was to see the imitation of London from the top of the imitation St Paul's. From the floor of the rotunda rose a circular structure of timber which supported the viewing galleries. You could make the ascent by conventional means (two spiral staircases). But it did not have to be attempted at all, because inside the core of the staircase was a miraculous 'ascending room', the very first passenger elevator in London. […] The ascent by foot had a considerable advantage in verisimilitude, because on the way up one could look out at the lower part of the panorama through an imitation of the scaffolding that had enclosed St Paul's when Hornor was working. Two circular lower galleries from which visitors could inspect the panorama at their leisure. […] The second gallery was 30 feet above the other, with a corresponding alteration in perspective. The city below and the horizon were farther away, though the detail of the portrayal was no less sharp; and above, to extend the illusion, was the original ball which had been replaced during the repair work in 1821-22, surmounted by a facsimile of the cross. The final touch of verisimilitude was provided by Hornor's frail hut, which was rigged atop the cross. […] All the lighting came from a seventy-five-foot sky-light at the top of the dome, which was concealed from the spectators. The picture, of course, was brightest at the top, the light diminishing toward the bottom. The gradation of lighting enhanced the illusion.[41]

According to contemporary accounts, the precision of the panorama was prodigious. Spectators were supplied with spy-glasses (small telescopes) so that they could scrutinize remote details which would have been invisible otherwise. 'From the City to Windsor Castle, Epping Forest, and Greenwich, everything was depicted with microscopic particularity.'[42] The completeness and extraordinary accuracy of the panorama seem to be at the heart of the incredible success of Hornor's achievement.

[41] Altick, *Shows of London*, 149.
[42] Altick, *Shows of London*, 149.

The sketch's principles of composition differ very much from those of the panorama. As opposed to the all-inclusive, totalizing view of the panorama painter, the sketcher's view is always partial and fragmentary. As we have seen before, the nature of the sketch is fragmentary, and usually, verbal sketches are short accounts of scenes which can unfold in very different parts of London, as is the case in Egan's *Life in London*. But fragmentariness is one of the sketch's aesthetic principles:

> Fragmentary forms are of course characteristic of Romantic art as well as literature--as Marjorie Levinson notes, 'the sketch, the torso, the poetic fragment, the beauty, the ruin, and the detached overture or song' so typical of the period are often seen as evidence of a Romantic preoccupation with 'imperfection' and 'indeterminacy. […] By omitting from his composition (conventional) signs of artifice, the poet communicates not so much his contempt for finish per se ... as for the labor thereby expressed and the servility thus implied.'[43]

This ties up with the more general argument about the art of Schlegel and Novalis, for whom 'every work of art was necessarily subject to a limit that only the fragment could transcend.'[44] Whereas the panorama artist prided himself on the comprehensive nature of his work, the incomplete nature of the sketch was an integral part of its creation. Let us look at the way Dickens's sketch 'Meditations in Monmouth-street' functions. Boz, seeing second-hand clothes in a shop, develops an amazing fantasy about their imaginary former owners. J. Hillis Miller has analysed this sketch in detail and according to him, this sketch follows a 'metonymic progression,'[45] which suggests that the whole sketch rests on the flimsiest fragment of clothes, and develops into this fantastically imaginative account. This principle is often used by Dickens in his sketches – as in 'Our Next-door Neighbour': 'We are very fond of speculating as we walk through a street, on the character and pursuits of the people who inhabit it; and nothing so materially assists us in these speculations as the appearance of the house doors' ('Our Next-Door Neighbour', SBB, 58). In this case, his sketch stems from mere fragments – street-door-knockers – which take him on an imaginative speculative journey about their owners. I would also say that by describing or drawing brief or incomplete sketches of city-life, sketch artists attempt to give us a brief impression of how the finished

[43] Byerly, 'Effortless Art', 353.
[44] Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans. Ronald L. Martinez (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota, 1993), 32.
[45] J. Hillis Miller, 'The Fiction of Realism: Sketches by Boz, Oliver Twist, and Cruikshank's Illustrations', in Ada Nisbet and Blake Nevius (eds.), *Dickens Centennial Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 85–153, (p. 98).

image may appear. Once more, the approach of the sketch-artist is radically different from that of the panorama artist. In the sketch the fragment is the starting point of a vision, or is suggestive of the total vision, while in the panorama, the artist leaves no room for suggestion or imagination and offers the most comprehensive view that can technically be achieved. This seems to corroborate the idea that the sketcher rejoices in an artist's aesthetics of fragmentation, which is more in tune with the *flâneur*'s way of apprehending the city. However, the next section of this argument will show that despite their differences, both ways of seeing are integral parts of the make up of the *flâneur*.

II. Dealing with change

In this section, I will show that these two modes of representation were both attempts to record and make sense of the profound transformation and acceleration which the city underwent in the nineteenth century. The *flâneur* was part of this culture which sought to map out the ever-changing cityscape. I will also demonstrate that a tension between accuracy and theatricality underpinned the construction of these technologies as well as that of the *flâneur*. Finally, I shall stress the point that the city required mechanisms which were just as fast-evolving at itself to apprehend its teeming multiplicity. In that respect, the format of the fast-produced and quickly discarded sketch seemed more adapted to transcribe the new environment.[46] Once more, a *flâneur*'s viewpoint, that of the sketch-artist, was called upon to translate urban changeability.

1. Shedding light on the city

Cities underwent drastic changes from the end of the eighteenth century onwards. The related and mutually supporting phenomena of urbanization and industrialization fostered the creation of the modern city. As F.S. Schwartzbach indicates, 'the growth of greater London's population – from 1,117,000 to 6,586,000 over the course of the century suggests the

[46] This point echoes what has recently been written about the lithograph in this period. In his new book, Stephen Bann comments at length on how the 'naivety' of some early lithographs came from the desire to transcribe as quickly as possible the political events of the day. See Stephen Bann, *Distinguished Images: Prints and the Visual Economy of Nineteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

astounding magnitude of those changes.'[47] The Victorians could claim to have invented the modern city as, by the time of the census of 1851, the urban population of the towns had overtaken that of the country to reach 51% of the total. The Victorians saw the cities sprawl out and expand in a seemingly uncontrollable manner, and London, 'the great emporium of the world,' was the epitome of the threatening, all-engulfing metropolis. As Alex Potts convincingly suggests, 'a new order was creating a new kind of environment, and to most of the middle-class commentators who made a point of describing their responses, the experience was unprecedented and also deeply contradictory.'[48] From the eighteenth century onwards, a great number of contemporaries began to comment upon the deeply disturbing nature of the urban experience.[49] The striking image of the blind beggar often epitomizes the unsettling puzzlement which characterizes the experience of the London city-streets. In John Gay's *Trivia; or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London*, the image of the 'groping blind'[50] is evoked twice. In Book VII of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth also describes the city as a place of chaos and instability. Wordsworth is 'smitten with the view / Of a blind Beggar […] Wearing a written paper to explain / The Story of the man, and Who he was […] in this Label was a type, / Or emblem, of the utmost that we know, / Both of ourselves and of the universe.'[51] Wordsworth's diction, combined with the numerous commas which split up the verses, hint at the fragmentation and illegibility of the city and of its inhabitants. For Jacques Derrida, the eyes of the blind man, devoid of a returning gaze, draw attention to the presence of darkness and invisibility at the heart of the modern city.[52] Nearly a century later, Engels commented on the dizzying magnitude of the metropolis and its alienating effects in *The Conditions of the Working Class in England in 1844*: 'A town, such as London, where a man may wander for hours together without reaching the beginning of the end, without meeting the slightest hint which could lead to the inference that there is open country within reach, is a strange thing.'[53] This meandering sentence, like the urban rambler through the London streets, hesitantly

[47] Ira Bruce Nadel, F.S. Schwartzbach (eds.), *Victorian Artists and the City: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Oxford: Pergamon Press Ltd., 1980), xv.
[48] Alex Potts, 'Picturing the Modern Metropolis: Images of London in the Nineteenth Century', *History Workshop*, 26 (Winter, 1988), 28-56, (p. 28).
[49] It is worth noting that London was already enormous in eighteenth-century Britain, and consequently started generated its own literary anxieties from very early on. What was new in nineteenth-century Britain was the phenomenal growth of provincial towns.
[50] John Gay, *Trivia; or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London* [1716], v. 51, 454.
[51] Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Book VII, v. 612-620, *The Major Works*, 483.
[52] See Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*.
[53] Friedrich Engels, *The Conditions of the Working Class in England in 1844* [1892], trans. Florence K. Wischnewetzky (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2008), 23.

winds its way through its clauses, reiterating the sense of loss and alienation generated by the city. Contemporaries bemoaned the feeling of repetition which characterized the metropolis. The impression of loss and aimlessness which stemmed from it is aptly described in *Little Dorrit*: 'Nothing to see but streets, streets, streets. Nothing to breathe but streets, streets, streets. Nothing to change the brooding mind, or raise it up.'[54] The growing desire for legibility was a direct consequence of cities turning into sprawling masses which became, in the eye of the public, illegible, dark, and uncontrollable. The gaze thus became an essential tool in this quest for clarity – the gaze of artists, whether they were sketchers or panoramists, was profoundly reassuring and grounding. How then did sketch-artists and panorama painters deal with this obfuscation of the city? What strategies did they adopt to shed light on this confusing and opaque new space?

2. Verisimilitude and theatricality

I would like to suggest that sketches and panoramas were both expressions of a desire to see and understand the changing city which manifested itself in a tension between accuracy and theatricality. Interestingly, this tension also informed the construction of the *flâneur*.

Panoramas were of course always striving for absolute authenticity, aiming to be so faithful to reality that they could be confused with the original model. Panoramists developed a whole array of strategies to deceive the spectators into thinking they were faced with reality. Visitors had to walk through a dark corridor and up a staircase before they reached the canvas, thus losing their bearings and forgetting about the city they had just stepped out from. Natural light flowed in from the ceiling, but was usually masked by a veil which concealed the upper edges of the canvas, while the lower part of the canvas was hidden by other natural objects such as fences or plants.[55] This careful set up was designed to ensure that no external element could defy the display or disrupt the spectator's contemplation. At the Colosseum, extraordinary efforts were made to reproduce the exact conditions in which the canvas had been painted. The actual hut Hornor had used and slept in to draw his sketches was exhibited on the top platform, where a fresh breeze circulated to give the impression that the spectator

[54] Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* [1857], eds. Helen Small, Stephen Wall (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), 43.
[55] See Altick, *Shows of London*, chapter 11, 'A Panorama in a Pleasure Dome', 149.

was at the top of the dome of St. Paul's. Verisimilitude was the essence of panoramas, as Richard Altick indicates:

> The heart of Barker's novelty was the special precautions taken to obliterate all physical circumstances that would detract from the panorama's illusion. So long as a picture has discernible edges, no matter how overwhelming its size, it remains a palpable counterfeit; no one mistakes it for a manifestation of the real world. It has, instead, its own integral reality, a circumscribed world existing only within the boundaries of the canvas. But a circular panorama, far from being an artist's flat, rectangular insert in the limitless surface of the spectator's world, purported to be that reality itself, enwrapping the spectators on all sides. The fact that the 'reality' existed only on painted canvas was obscured by the absence of anything *besides* the canvas.[56]

Numerous anecdotes recount the effect of the panorama upon spectators. Queen Charlotte declared she felt seasick when she beheld a capsized boat at the 1794 panorama *View of the fleet at Spithead*. A dog reportedly tried to dive into the painted river Thames at one panorama. This is reminiscent of the story Pliny the Elder's story about Zeuxis, who 'represented some grapes, painted so naturally that the birds flew towards the spot where the picture was exhibited.'[57] These stories of the hyper-real only increased panoramas' fascination for the public. Indeed, panorama-goers paid great attention to the exactness of the depiction, and often complained if the most recently erected structures in their cities did not feature on the canvas.

Panoramas were painted with scientific precision – miniaturists and portrait painters with a reputation for meticulous attention to detail were hired, and the camera obscura was often employed for refining small details. Given these elements, it is perhaps not surprising that some neoclassical, academic painters were violently opposed to panoramas and declared them to be soulless, mechanical reproductions, devoid of any artistry. Such concerns were echoed in book VII of *The Prelude*, in which Wordsworth underlines that the mechanical, mirror-like 'imitation' of the panorama places it outside the realm of art:

> Those sights that ape

[56] Altick, *Shows of London*, 188.
[57] Pliny the Elder, *The Natural History*, trans. Henry Thomas Riley, 6 vols (London: H.G. Bohn, 1857), vol. 6, book 35, 251-2.

The absolute presence of reality,
Expressing, as in mirror, sea and land,
And what earth is, and what she has to show.
I do not here allude to subtlest craft,
By means refined attaining purest ends,
But imitations, fondly made in plain
Confession of man's weakness and his loves.[58]

The classical logic relied upon spectators to participate in an imaginative game to complete the painting, and consequently, 'from the moment [the panorama] no longer subscribed to the classical logic […], it gave in to the demands of totalization to the extent that it culminated in the mixing of genres for the satisfaction of all senses – touch, sight, sound and smell.'[59] The panorama quickly became a totalizing experience. By the 1820's, it was an architectural experience which summoned all the senses, an experience of viewing which was one of body immersion, rather than just looking. At the heart of panoramas lay the desire to reproduce with scientific precision an all-encompassing vision of reality as well as the experience of viewing itself.

However, sketches too, in spite of their characteristic slightness, were often praised for their realism and precision. As Martina Lauster indicates, 'from the early nineteenth century, English sketches had alluded to clock-making and optical technology, or more precisely, the entertainment media based on them, to advertise the acuteness of their own social portraits.'[60] This metaphor has very interesting connotations, for it immediately summons a series of ideas associated with industrialized, nineteenth-century Britain. The ubiquitous appearance of clocks, which was synonymous with the arrival of railway time or Greenwich Mean Time, sounded the death-knell for local time throughout England. The introduction of a single standard time coincided with the rise of industrialization, the speeding-up of society and the advent of a new economic order. Clock time, which was closely associated with the industrial revolution, mechanization and standardization, fundamentally transformed many aspects of social life.[61] In using this metaphor, sketch-artists associated themselves with human genius

[58] Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, VII, v. 232-9; 259, *The Major Works*, 474.
[59] Comment, *The Panorama*, 104.
[60] Martina Lauster, *Sketches of the Nineteenth Century: European Journals and its Physiologies, 1830-1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 82.
[61] See E.P. Thompson 'Time-Work Discipline and Industrial Capitalism', *Past & Present*, 38 (1967), pp. 56-97.

and supreme accuracy, but also commented on the world they were portraying. The clock exemplified regularity, harmony, and social organisation. Each member of this industrialized urban society performed their role in a well-organised, rational, mechanized environment, just as each part of the clock slotted into the machinery in a rational and predictable fashion.

By using this metaphor, sketch-artists might also have been pointing to their own role in the separation of society into discrete and clearly defined sections. The genre of *Physiologies* devised a quasi-scientific method of observing the social body, based on the careful categorization of social types. Interestingly, these scientific metaphors were very often taken up by sketchers themselves to define their own productions. In *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, Jules Janin explains that the contributors to the anthology can reproduce fragments of reality as accurately as the camera obscura or the daguerreotype, which has only just been invented (1837).[62] In *Life in London*, Egan claims that his and Cruikshank's work offers a vision as clear as that provided by the latest technology: 'A Camera Obscura View of the Metropolis, with the Light and Shade attached to "seeing Life."'[63] Lady Blessington's own London sketches, *The Magic Lantern: Or Sketches of Scenes in the Metropolis*,[64] also refers to this scientific approach since the 'magic lantern' she mentions in her title was an optical device using slides to display magnified images on a white screen in a darkened room, which was a privileged tool in scientific education at the time. The metaphors used to describe the *flâneur* constantly updated themselves with the development of new technologies. In 1858, Victor Fournel compared the *flâneur* to a daguerreotype: 'Cet homme-là est un daguerréotype mobile et passionné, qui garde les moindres traces, et en qui se reproduisent, avec leur reflets changeants, la marche des choses, le mouvement de la cité.'[65] Egan's *Life in London* too bore testimony to the association between sketches and science, as he constantly insisted on the true-to-life nature of his and Cruikshank's depiction of London life – Egan calls Cruikshank's sketch of Tom and Jerry taking Blue Ruin 'a fine sketch of real life,'[66] and a few pages on, praises Cruikshank's accuracy anew:

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[62] Jules Janin, introduction to *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, 9 vols (Paris: ed. L. Curmer, 1839-1842), vol. 1, xiii.
[63] Egan, *Life in London*, 18.
[64] Marguerite Blessington, *The Magic Lantern: Or Sketches of Scenes in the Metropolis* [1823] (London: Kessinger Publishing, 2009).
[65] Victor Fournel, *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris* [1855] (Paris: Adolphe Delahays, 1858), 261. 'That kind of man is a passionate and mobile daguerreotype, who registers the faintest traces of things, and in whom is reproduced, with their changing reflections, the flow of events, the movement of the city.'
[66] Egan, *Life in London*, Book 2, chapter 2, 177.

> This group (which the plate so correctly delineates, and in point of *character*, equal to any of Hogarth's celebrated productions) displays a complete picture of what is termed low life in the Metropolis; drunkenness, beggary, lewdness, and carelessness, being its prominent features. It is, however, quite *new* to thousands in London![67]

The Cruikshank brothers' frontispiece of *Life in London* represents the variety of urban life through an architectural column mounted by various characters from the novel.[68] According to Egan, the plate is there 'to show, from the highest to the lowest member of society, that the *ramifications* would not have been complete if a *shade* only had been forgotten.'[69] Egan's ambition is to give a 'complete CYCLOPAEDIA'[70] of London Life. To take one last example, the subtitle of Dickens's *Sketches By Boz, Illustrative of Every-day Life and Every-day People*, signals that the sketches are there to help his contemporaries see and distinguish between typical individuals encountered in the city; – it points to the sketcher's role as an investigator of urban life and urban practices. In his preface, Dickens himself underlines the authentic nature of his sketches, which he calls 'little pictures of life and manners as they really are' (SBB, 7). There is, at the heart of the sketch, a tacitly acknowledged desire for precision and comprehensiveness quite at odds with their provisional and unfinished character. This is the argument of Richard Sha, for whom the visual sketch carries the stamp of authenticity thanks to 'the sketch's broken lines, hasty brushwork, roughness, and irregularity.' But it is precisely this unfinished nature which 'makes the visual sketch more ideologically effective insofar as ideology gains persuasiveness when it does not look like itself.'[71] The implication here is that panoramas restrict reality, while sketches expand it.

Dickens's *Sketches By Boz* were considerably praised at the time for their authenticity, as the following extract from the *Morning Post* demonstrates:

> The author is evidently a close and accurate observer of events in 'life's dull stream,' and he has infinite skill in giving importance to the common-place scenes of every-day occurrences. The varied aspects of society in the middle and lower classes are touched off with admirable truth and vivacity. The graphic

[67] Egan, *Life in London*, Book 2, chapter 2, 181.
[68] See Figure 5. George Cruikshank, Frontispiece of *Life in London*, 1821, hand-coloured engraving.
[69] Egan, *Life in London*, Book 1, chapter 1, 2.
[70] Egan, *Life in London*, Book 1, chapter 1, 23.
[71] Richard C. Sha, *The Visual Sketch and Verbal Sketch in British Romanticism* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1998), 1.

> descriptions of 'Boz' invest all he describes with amazing reality. This pleasing vraisemblance is the great charm of these 'sketches,' as they are modestly termed by the author.[72]

All the elements underlined out by Richard Sha – the modesty of ambition, the genuineness, the effectiveness – are present in this praise of the sketches. Interestingly, Cruikshank's title-page for the monthly parts of *Sketches By Boz*, representing Dickens and Cruikshank in an air-balloon above the crowds, is suggestive of a comprehensive mode of vision which is not unlike that of the panoramist.[73] The comprehensiveness of panoramas was a constant concern throughout Dickens's life. Richard Maxwell noted that one of Dickens's later achievements was to write for and edit two great family magazines, *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, which were, 'like the Colosseum itself – prominent examples of Victorian entrepreneurship, of the attempt to combine instruction with entertainment and make money in the process.'[74] The project at the heart of his magazines – assembling short and diverse piece under one heading – was thus not very different from Hornor's venture, which was to bring together miscellaneous entertainments under one single superstructure.

The idea of assembling diverse sketches to form a panorama was popular on both sides of the Channel. The very popular verbal and visual sketch anthologies or *physiologies* published in that period – be it *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un* (1831-1834), *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes* (1839-41), *Le Diable à Paris* (1845-46), or Edward Bulwer Lytton's *England and the English*[75] (1833) – came to be known, under Walter Benjamin's influence, as 'panorama literature': 'It is a panorama literature […] These books consist of individual sketches which, as it were, reproduce the plastic foreground of those panoramas with their anecdotal form and the extensive background of the panoramas with their store of information' (CB, 35). This denomination implies that the mode of vision adopted by *flâneurs*, or free-roaming sketchers, seems to be as good a way to decipher the city and its inhabitants as the panorama. Through multiplication and collaborative efforts, sketchers

[72] *Morning Post*, 12 March 1836, quoted in Paul Schlicke, 'Risen like a Rocket: The Impact of Sketches By Boz', *Dickens Quarterly*, vol. 22, issue 1 (March 2005), 3-20, (p. 9).
[73] See Figure 6. George Cruikshank, Frontispiece of *Sketches by Boz*, 1836, etching on paper..
[74] Richard Maxwell, 'Dickens's Omniscience', *ELH*, 46, 2 (Summer, 1979), 292.
[75] Edward Bulwer Lytton, *England and the English* (London: Richard Bentley, 1833).

ultimately obtain a totalizing panorama of the city as it really is.[76] The subtitle of *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes, Encyclopédie morale du XIX^e^ siècle*, underscores this totalizing ambition. One of the purposes of physiologies, after all, is to assemble slices and tableaux, to stitch fragments together, to create unity out of odd scraps of city-life, which ties in with the aestheticizing perspective of panoramas. Ferguson is right to suggest that the urban imagination functions like metonymies or more precisely synecdoches: 'This "urban imagination" is then very much a "synecdochal imagination," defined by the ability simultaneously to conceive the part and the whole. […] Synecdoche thus bespeaks the aesthetic of integration.'[77] Similarly, one might say physiologies function like synecdoches, as each member of the city they portray becomes a paradigmatic element of the cityscape, a fragment of the city which allows it to be apprehended in its entirety. There is a clear link here between these synechdocic physiologies and a form of totalizing desire. Interestingly, a writer in one of the popular French physiologies coined the word 'anthroporama' ('myriades d'êtres qui parsèment l'anthroporama de Paris').[78] The etymology of this neologism confirms the totalizing ambition which governed physiologies, as does Jules Janin's introduction to *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*: 'Nous nous montrerons à eux [nos petits neveux] non pas seulement peints en buste, mais des pieds à la tête. […] Dans cette lanterne magique, où nous nous passons en revue les uns et les autres, rien ne sera oublié […]; en un mot, rien ne manquera à cette œuvre complète.'[79] The epistemological project which underlies these panoramic texts appears to be strikingly similar to that of the nascent social sciences.[80] The idea of the total survey thus informs not only panoramas, but also the sketch books which were produced in that period. Traces of this totalizing ideal in literature and etchings can even

[76] Other critics have also discussed physiologies as 'panoramic literature.' See Richard Sieburth, 'Same Difference: The French Physiologies, 1840-1842' in Norman Cantor (ed.), *Notebooks in Cultural analysis I* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1984), pp. 163-200.

[77] Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson, *Paris as Revolution: Writing the Nineteenth-Century City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 68.

[78] Andréas, 'Les incomplets', *Le Prisme. Encyclopédie morale du dix-neuvième siècle* (Paris: L. Curmer, 1841), 32, quoted in Karlheinz Stierle, *La Capitale des signes, Paris et son discours* (Paris: Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2001), 133. 'Myriads of beings who people the anthroporama of Paris.'

[79] Jules Janin, *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, introduction, xvi. 'We shall show ourselves to them [our grandnephews] by painting not merely half-length portraits, but full-length portraits of ourselves. […] In this magic lantern, in which we review everyone, nothing will be forgotten […]; put simply, nothing will be missing from this complete work.'

[80] The nineteenth century witnessed an unprecedented growth of social statistics, which was linked to demography, sanitation reports, etc… See Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation 1830-1864* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), and Catherine Kudlick, *Cholera in Post-Revolutionary Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

be found much later in the century. In the epilogue to the 1861 edition of *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Baudelaire wrote a parodic version of Rastignac's overview of Paris:

Le cœur content, je suis monté sur la montagne
D'où l'on peut contempler la ville en son ampleur,
Hôpital, lupanar, purgatoire, enfer, bagne,

Où toute énormité fleurit comme une fleur.
Tu sais bien, ô Satan, patron de ma détresse,
Que je n'allais pas là pour répandre un vain pleur;

Mais comme un vieux paillard d'une vieille maîtresse,
Je voulais m'enivrer de l'énorme catin
Dont le charme infernal me rajeunit sans cesse.

Que tu dormes encor dans les draps du matin,
Lourde, obscure, enrhumée, ou que tu te pavanes
Dans les voiles du soir passementés d'or fin,

Je t'aime, ô capitale infâme! Courtisanes
Et bandits, tels souvent vous offrez des plaisirs
Que ne comprennent pas les vulgaires profanes.[81]

Baudelaire's panoramic gaze shows us what goes on behind the scenes and up close. In Baudelaire's poem, the 'shining world' of Parisian society is transformed into a world of 'Hospital, brothel, purgatory, hell, prison.' Paris's reclining body metamorphoses into that of an 'enormous harlot', and Rastignac's solemn address to Paris becomes an equivocal outcry: 'I love you, oh, infamous capital!' What is remarkable here is that *Les Fleurs du mal*, the

[81] Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 'Epilogue', *OC*, vol. 1, 191. 'My heart content, I climbed the mountain, from which one can contemplate the city in its fullness, hospital, brothel, purgatory, hell, prison, where all enormity flowers as a flower. You know well, O Satan, patron of my distress, that I did not go there to shed a vain tear; but, like a dirty old man with an old mistress, I wanted to inebriate myself with the enormous whore whose infernal charm endlessly rejuvenates me. Whether you are still asleep in morning's sheets, heavy, obscure, sick with a cold, or whether you strut about in the veils of evening, trimmed in fine gold, I love you O infamous capital! Courtesans, and bandits, to such you often offer your favours, which the common and ungodly do not understand.' (trans. Claire Ortiz Hill, *The Roots and Flowers of Evil in Baudelaire, Nietzsche, and Hitler* (Chicago: Open Court, 2006), 77).

collection of a *flâneur*'s sketches of the darker side of Paris, are condensed in one strikingly image in this epilogue (or peritext).

However, despite this 'scopic and Gnostic drive'[82] of sketches and panoramas, there is a definite sense of artificiality at the heart of both media too. The fact that panoramas were artificial reproductions of real vistas was very attractive for a public unwilling to climb to the top of Saint Paul's to behold the cityscape. The techniques and technology used to reproduce that cityscape was one of the features which fascinated them most. First, panoramas gave Londoners a very grand, idealized, and somewhat theatrical vision of London, which strongly concurred with the vision the architects of the time had for London. George IV had devised a grand scheme for rebuilding the capital with the help of architects such as John Nash, John Soane, and Robert Smirke, which endowed London with a sense of magnificence and grandeur. 'The Regency improvements accentuated the beauty and grandeur of London and enhanced its theatricality. George Moore observed that the circular lines of Regent Street itself resembled an amphitheatre.'[83] The theatricality of panoramas can also be ascribed to the way 'the panoramic image fixes the viewer in a single spot from which the appearance of the city slowly unfolds in a kind of narrative circuit. Rooftops, steeples, streets and squares have a hidden, potential narrative, waiting to be discovered.'[84] A crucial aspect of the way the panorama functions is its introduction of distance. After having ascended to the top of the platform, contemporaries could look down upon their city, which gave them the reassuring impression that the world was organised around and by them, and yet, thanks to the artificial distance the panorama introduced, it was a world from which they were also separated and protected. It seems that the invention of the panorama ties in with a desire for supremacy and control, which one might set side by side with the spread of Empire.[85]

The panorama actually introduced several degrees of separation between the real city and the public that came to observe its supposed replica. First of all, by stepping into an artificial circular structure built specially for that purpose, spectators were cut off from the

[82] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 91-92.
[83] Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets*, 26.
[84] Nead, *Victorian Babylon*, 22.
[85] Panoramas consistently represented cities or landscapes belonging to the Empire – London saw panoramas of Calcutta, Hong Kong, the 'great temple of Karnak and the surrounding city of Thebes ', and of the 'Himalaya Mountains with the British stations of Kussowlee, Soobathoo, and Simla, and a vast extent of the plains of Hindostan', to name but a few. (For a complete list of all the panoramas exhibited in England, see Laurie Garrison (ed.), *Panoramas 1787–1900: Texts and Contexts*, 5 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012).

actual city in which they were usually immersed. Second, the vantage point spectators were offered after their ascent had itself been painted from a position that would necessarily give an impression of dominance and control. Finally, panoramas allowed the upper and middle-classes to see the city without rubbing shoulders with the classes which enabled that city to function. At first, the panorama did not necessarily represent individuals, its focus being more on buildings and celebrated landmarks. Shows were usually opened first to patrons and the upper-classes at five shillings a head, as was the case for the Colosseum in Summer 1829, and then the organisers would progressively lower the price of admissions. They would also implement specific admission policies, with entrance fees going from one-shilling for the lower classes – these shows were usually packed with spectators – and more expensive days for the upper classes, which would of course be less crowded.[86] This enabled the upper classes to admire their city leisurely without having to think about the poverty and misery that a city of such magnitude could engender. To a certain extent, then, optical shows such as panoramas appeared to have participated in the production of the middle-class viewer; arguably, they played a part in obfuscating the poverty that was built into the very structure of London. Moreover, the panorama had the stamp of respectability upon it, which the theatre did not always have. As Comment indicates, it was an 'alternative to the theatre in a period when playgoing was unthinkable to the "serious" families of London. The Evangelical fervour which reached its peak in those decades had revived the old Puritan hostility toward the stage.'[87] Even middle-class families had their comfort and respectability to keep in mind. The public was often composed of rowdy and sometimes riotous working-class men and women 'whose proximity was offensive to ear, eye, and nose. At the panorama, morality and respectability were not in question. The head of the family could treat his wife and children to a visit, secure in the knowledge that they would be edified, never corrupted, by the sight and the surroundings.'[88] Thus, panoramas, through the distance they introduced between individuals and the city, enabled Victorians to indulge into the dream of absolute dominance while keeping the underworld of the city at a safe distance.

I mentioned the word 'theatricality' before to evoke this sense of artificiality, but all these elements seem to point to the fact that, unlike theatres, panoramas introduced distance.

[86] See Richard Altick, *Shows of London*, chapter 11, 'The Theatrical Art of the Panorama', 184.
[87] Comment, *The Panorama*, 184.
[88] Comment, *The Panorama*, 184.

Panoramas created a gap between the members of their public by introducing drastically different admission fees, while in theatres, all social classes rubbed shoulders with each other, although there was of course segregation by boxes and tiers. Moreover, at the theatre, the public is close to the stage and to the actors, who sometimes interact with the audience, using techniques such as the aside or improvised exchanges. The panorama, on the other hand, introduces a considerable distance between the spectators and the scene. Therefore, the distance introduced by panoramas might make them anti-theatres rather than theatres, even though they were both forms of staged entertainment. All these forms of optical recreations were designed to divert the public, but they also contributed to the development of a new public which would consume visual spectacles over the coming decades.

However, sketches too, in spite of their seeming artlessness, authenticity and spontaneity, are also very theatrical. There is a sense that in sketches, reality is staged. Let us take the example of one of the Cruikshanks' illustrations of Egan's *Life in London, Tom getting the best of a Charley*.[89] The Cruikshanks decided to illustrate a particularly dramatic moment of the story, when Tom gets into an argument with a night watchman, or 'Charley.' The background of the sketch resembles a theatre backdrop. Tom and the watchman are represented at the most dramatic, climactic moment of the fight, while the characters on the side seem to reflect our position as spectators of the scene. George Cruikshank uses the same strategy in his illustration of 'Seven Dials,'[90] which represents a fight between two women. The street serves as a backdrop, the passers-by become onlookers (thus reflecting our own position as spectators) and form a small circle around the two women. In this way, they create a form of scenic space, a wooden O which underlines the theatrical and staged quality of the sketch, while the exaggerated body-language of the two women arguing is reminiscent of the farce. Dickens himself explicitly refers to the theatre in this piece to sketch the last act of the brawl:

> This somewhat personal allusion, not only to the lady's habits of intemperance, but also to the state of her wardrobe, rouses her utmost ire, and she accordingly complies with the urgent request of the bystanders to 'pitch in,' with considerable alacrity. The scuffle became general, and terminates, in minor play-bill

[89] See Figure 7. George and Robert Cruikshank, 'Tom getting the best of a Charley (The Night Watchman) by Emptying Him from His Sentry Box Giclee', *Life in London*, 1821, hand-coloured engraving
[90] See Figure 8. George Cruikshank, 'Seven Dials', *Sketches by Boz*, 1836, etching on paper.

phraseology, with 'arrival of the policemen, interior of the station-house, and impressive DENOUEMENT' (SBB, 93).

Forster tells us that Dickens 'went to theatres almost every night for a long time'[91] when he was young, so he was most familiar with the conventions of drama and comedy. A contemporary critic said that the tales were told in 'so dramatic a manner, that they want little more than division into scenes to become excellent theatrical pieces.'[92] Many of the sketches were actually dramatized, sometimes by Dickens himself. In a very detailed article, Edward Costigan studied the dramatic rhythm of the sketches, their organisation into tableaux, their use of theatrical conventions, thus demonstrating their dramatic nature.[93] The word rhythm here is interesting since it refers to an effect of ordered movement in a play, and this order is attained by paying scrupulous attention to patterns in the timing, spacing, repetition, accenting of words and scene. In Thackeray's 1848 novel *Vanity Fair*, whose original title was *Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society*,[94] the author uses the extended metaphor of the theatre throughout his preface which is entitled 'Before the Curtain.' He introduces himself as the 'manager of the performance,' touches upon the subject of scenes and the scenery, and concludes by announcing the beginning of the play: 'And with this, and a profound bow to his patrons, the Manager retires, and the curtain rises.'[95] The theatrical distance that is present at the heart of the sketches functions in the same way as in the panorama, though less obviously – middle-class readers obtain an insight into the real life of their city while simultaneously staying at a safe distance from it. One particularly striking example of this paradoxical desire to see the city without having any sort of contact with it is expressed at the beginning of *Life in London*: 'The author, in consequence, has chosen for his readers a *Camera Obscura* view of London, not only from its safety, but because it is so *snug*, and also possessing the invaluable advantages of SEEING and not being *seen*.'[96] The middle classes can contemplate the lives of people from the comfort of their own home, and the plight of the poor is played down through theatricality, comedy, or even, paradoxically, through the unpretentious nature of the sketch. Distance is, here again, the crux of the matter.

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[91] John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens* [1872-1874], 2 vols (London: Everyman's Library, 1966), I, 49.
[92] George Hogarth, *Morning Chronicle*, 11 Feb. 1836, quoted in Edward Costigan, 'Drama and Everyday Life in Sketches By Boz', *Review of English. Studies*. New Series 27 (1976), 403-21. (p. 405).
[93] Edward Costigan, 'Drama and Everyday Life in Sketches By Boz', *Review of English. Studies*. New Series 27 (1976), 403-21.
[94] Lauster, *Sketches of the Nineteenth Century*, 164.
[95] William Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* [1848], ed. John Carey (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), 5-6.
[96] Egan, *Life in London*, 18.

Victorians used both sketches and panoramas as media to observe the illegible city they lived in as well as themselves. The distance introduced by both forms was necessary to grasp the ever-changing reality of the teeming metropolis that the public both feared and yearned to scrutinize. Sketches and panoramas were paradoxically both consciously displaying their own artificiality while at the same time striving for authenticity and accuracy. The figure of the *flâneur* himself displayed the same characteristics. On the one hand, he was cast as the botanist and collector documenting the changes which affected the city with accuracy; – on the other hand, a spectator and showman who relished observing and recounting the dramatic and implausible incidents of everyday life.

3. Stopping and Rushing

We have established that these two forms were governed by the same hunger for knowledge and visual dominance of the fast-changing city. However, given the fleeting and unstable nature of the city, it seems that the sketch was intrinsically more adapted to this ever-expanding metropolis. Panoramas tried to impose order on the fluctuating, chaotic city. Hornor's panorama, housed at the Colosseum, represented a rounded panorama as seen from a bird's-eye view atop St Paul's, the highest point of the city. It gave a view of a flawless and smoothed-out London, without the industrial smog or the teeming life and activity which was inextricably part of the metropolis. It could be seen as a way of halting speed or acceleration, as an attempt to understand in static form the rushing past of life. The sketch, on the contrary, seems to celebrate disorder and revel in the tumultuous city. The very nature of the sketch, then, seems more adapted to the new restless city, since the sketch is an attempt to capture disorder, or what is fleeting – sketching implies taking on a different, much more immediate relationship with time. Sketching is also a more personal way to apprehend the city, since it implies getting to grips with an object, appropriating it. One could suggest that, with the multiplication of sketches, another unofficial map of London surfaces (which is not unlike de Certeau's 'long poem of walking'). This 'map' has much more to do with the individual, who then creates his or her own topography of the multi-faceted city.

First of all, the fragmentary nature of the sketch appears to be ideally suited to the fragmentary experience the modern city has to offer. Kathryn Chittick underlined the disconnectedness of urban experience in relation to the fragmentary nature of serial

publications. According to her, during the 1830s, 'the intense political interests of the time meant that news in its regular bits and pieces was the most compelling reading and consequently, that reading became a fragmentary experience.'[97] The fragmentariness of the sketch was thus perfectly in keeping with the ever-accelerating rhythm of the metropolis. Sara Thornton, speaking about advertising, explains that the experience of reading in the nineteenth century was becoming 'a matter of having text drift or rush past the eye:'

> Text was reduced to contiguous units. One begins to see the world not in linear sequence but in self-contained pieces of text and image which can then be linked up to subsequent pieces. Our eye drifts across a page of ads from frame to frame, one frame remaining in our vision as the other is taken in, creating a palimpsestuous merging or superposition of one frame onto another. The effect here is of fragmentation and yet also sequence and flow.[98]

The brevity of the verbal sketch was thus a form that seemed more in tune with this accelerating urban world. Moreover, in the archetypal nineteenth-century townscape, scenes and events arise as quickly as they dissolve, like drawings made on the surface of water, and the rapidity of execution of the sketcher corresponds to this new pace of urban life. The on-the-spotness of the sketch agrees with the fluidity of urban experience. Baudelaire commented on this affinity between the city and the urban sketch-artist, whose the speed of execution he praised: 'Mais il y a dans la vie triviale, dans la métamorphose journalière des choses extérieures, un mouvement rapide qui commande à l'artiste une égale vélocité d'exécution.'[99] Interestingly, Baudelaire designated Constantin Guys as the ideal *flâneur* and sketch-artist. Guys was a journalist who was based in London and travelled frequently to Paris between 1840 and 1860, and who produced illustrated news reports for the *Illustrated London News*. He was at the heart of the fast-paced exchanges and movements I have attempted to sketch in this study. This sketch-artist – this 'minor poet'[100] – was not only immersed in the London crowd we mentioned before, he was constantly dealing with current affairs, and thus always immersed in the present, the ephemeral, which is crucial to Baudelaire: 'Le plaisir que nous retirons de la représentation du présent tient non-seulement à la beauté dont il peut être revêtu,

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[97] Kathryn Chittick, *Dickens and the 1830's* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), 24.
[98] Sara Thornton, *Advertising, Subjectivity and the Nineteenth-Century Novel: Dickens, Balzac and the Language of the Walls* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 9.
[99] Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', *OC*, vol. 2, 687. 'In trivial life, in the daily metamorphosis of external things, there is a rapidity of movement which calls for an equal speed of execution from the artist.' (trans. Mayne, 4).
[100] Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', *OC*, vol. 2, 683.

mais aussi à sa qualité essentielle de présent.'[101] For Baudelaire, the urban sketch-artist, by painting what is fluctuating and circumstantial, touches upon eternal truth:

> Observateur, flâneur, philosophe, appelez-le comme vous voudrez; mais vous serez certainement amené, pour caractériser cet artiste, à le gratifier d'une épithète que vous ne sauriez appliquer au peintre des choses éternelles, ou du moins plus durables, des choses héroïques ou religieuses. Quelquefois il est poète; plus souvent il se rapproche du romancier ou du moraliste; il est le peintre de la circonstance et de tout ce qu'elle suggère d'éternel.[102]

For Baudelaire and his contemporaries, the fleeting moment is at the core of the visual-cognitive experience of the modern city, which is also at the root of visual and verbal sketches – immersing oneself in the city is of paramount importance to apprehend the city. This correlation between the nature of the city and that of the sketch might explain the extraordinary profusion of sketches during the century. Let us take a closer look at verbal sketches – their form seems to mimic that of the urban encounter. In Egan's *Life in London*, Tom and Jerry participate briefly in these city sprees, but they move from one scene to the next just as slides abruptly follow on in a magic lantern show – with the narrative thread connecting these urban encounters being at best flimsy, often inexistent. The following extract exemplifies the fleeting nature of the urban experience:

> A *peep* at Bow-Street-Office; a *stroll* through Westminster-Abbey; a *lounge* at the Royal Academy; and hour passed with the Eccentrics; a *strut* through the lobbies of the Theatres; and a *trot* on Sundays in Rotten-row, in calculation, have all turned to good account. Even, if out of wind, and compelled to make a *stand-still* over the Elgin marbles at the British Museum, it will be found the time has not been misapplied.[103]

The episodic form of *Life in London* or *Sketches by Boz* associates them with the *feuilletons* which, for Benjamin, belonged to 'dioramic literature.' Interestingly, the French edition of

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[101] Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', *OC*, vol. 2, 684. 'The pleasure which we derive from the representation of the present is due not only to the beauty with which it can be invested, but also to its essential quality of being present.' (trans. Mayne, 1.)

[102] Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', *OC*, vol. 2, 686. 'Observer, philosopher, *flâneur* – call him what you will; but whatever words you use in trying to define this kind of artist, you will certainly be led to bestow upon him some adjective which you could not apply to the painter of the eternal, or at least more lasting things, of heroic or religious subjects. Sometimes he is a poet; more often he comes closer to the novelist or the moralist; he is the painter of the passing moment and of all the suggestions of eternity that it contains.' (trans. Mayne, 4-5.)

[103] Egan, *Life in London*, 32.

Life in London, which was published in 1822, was entitled *Diorama Anglais, ou Promenades pittoresques à Londres*, ('The English Diorama; or Picturesque Rambles in London'[104]). We have already commented on the fact that many of Dickens's *Sketches* originate in accidental encounters, as is the case in 'The Drunkard's Death', or in scenes rapidly glimpsed at in passing, as in 'The Hospital Patient'. For Schwarzbach,

> Dickens' unique contribution to writing about the city is the unifying vision of urban experience which lies behind it: a vision of the urban milieu as an eternal here and now, 'whose content was transience, but whose transience was permanent'. *Sketches By Boz* embody this same perception: a new, unmistakably urban, sensibility. […] It was a manifestation of the birth of what, for lack of a better term, must be called the essentially modern consciousness, an outgrowth of the revolutionary experience of the modern city.[105]

The fleeting encounter became a staple scene of urban literature. In Baudelaire's 'À une passante,' a woman dressed in mourning walks by, and the poet elevates her to the status of 'fugitive beauté'[106] – she becomes a haunting presence precisely because of her evanescence and anonymity. Benjamin writes that 'the delight of the city-dweller is not so much love at first sight as love at last sight' (CB, 45). The urban encounter is characterized by its evanescence, and the form of the sketch seems admirably well-suited to replicate this experience. Deborah Epstein Nord stressed this aspect of verbal sketches:

> The form of the literary sketch reproduces the brief encounter, the moment of viewing the urban scene. It tells no stories, nor does it sustain the encounter between author and reader any more than the content of the sketch itself sustains the relation between the urban observer and what he observes.[107]

The verbal sketch is also very well adapted to the modern city for another reason, according to *Martina Lauster:* '"Sketching" implies a present-tense form of writing that depicts and interprets what is seen, thereby joining the act of 'reading' – in a literal sense – to the process of seeing and interpreting enacted on the page. In this way the sketch establishes itself as a specific form of present-day cognition.'[108] Sketches create a dynamic relation between the

[104] Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets*, 31.
[105] F.S. Schwarzbach, *Dickens and the City* (London: The Athlone Press, 1979), 42.
[106] Baudelaire, 'À une Passante', *Les Fleurs du Mal*, *OC*, vol. 1, 92.
[107] Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets*, 31.
[108] Lauster, *Sketches of the Nineteenth Century*, 21.

written word and the visual, which befits the fluctuating world of the modern city admirably well.

I have demonstrated that the birth of panoramas and the multiplication of sketches stemmed from a deeply-rooted desire to see and know the fluctuating and therefore inscrutable city. The panorama is a still picture, an anachronistic freeze frame which attempts to apprehend the city by halting acceleration. It seeks to attenuate the effects of disruption, while the sketch fully embraces and celebrates dissonance and disorder. The sketches does so because its nature agrees so well with the fluctuating nature of the new, ever-changing, ever-expanding metropolis. The *flâneur*, whose point of view is similar to that of the sketcher's, thus seems to be an ideal candidate to process and apprehend the many changes which affected the city at the time.

III. Mobility and Technology as Informing Principles of Urban Perception

I would now like to show that these new technologies and the new 'ways of seeing' they engendered were linked to mobility and the changes which affected mobility in that period. Mobility and vision became inextricably connected in numerous and complex ways during the nineteenth century. First, one should insist on the mobility of panoramas and sketches themselves. Sketches and even panoramas were not static, they were to be moved on, passed on and recycled, which itself had an effect on ways of seeing and apprehending the city. In turn, mobility was central to both sketch artists and panoramists in the conception of these works – flâneurial vision turns out to be at the root of both sketches and panoramas. Sketches and panoramas not only served to represent changes as they happened, they, in turn, set the city into motion by reshaping its dynamics of vision and representation. Similarly, the *flâneur*, who was sent scouting the cityscape, ends up influencing and changing people's perception of the urban space.

1. Mobile technologies

First, let us focus on the mobility and transience of sketches and panoramas themselves. The gigantic canvases onto which panoramas were painted were of course not as easy to move as sketches were, but interestingly, canvases would invariably tour the country and even Europe, and from the 1850s onwards, companies were set up to organise these shows, some of which soon became international. As Comment indicates, 'the panoramic phenomenon was not solely pictorial however; we should not forget that from the outset, Barker's brand of neologism dictated both a 360-degree representation and a rotunda to accommodate it.'[109] Indeed, such enterprise needed businessmen, financiers, architects, designers, teams of workers and project-coordinators. The canvases frequently toured England and Europe, thus considerably increasing their visibility. Comment gives the example of the famous Austrian portrait and landscape painter Johann Michael Sattler, who painted a 360-degree panorama of Salzburg from the top of Salzburg's castle in 1824. He first exhibited his panorama in Salzburg in 1829, and then set off with the painting on a ten-year-long tour 'that took him across Austria, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Paris, and then back to Germany,' which was quite an achievement for the time, since he had travelled 'with 30 tons and crossing approximately 30,000 kilometres of land and water'.[110] One must not underestimate the great mobility of panoramas at the time. Canvases were also sometimes recycled and given a new life. After the initial triumph of Hornor's panorama at the Colosseum in the 1820s, the view of London progressively lost its appeal and went out of fashion, until it was restored by George Damson in 1843. He modified the painting slightly, altered the lighting, refurbished the exhibition room and called it *London by Night*, which was a triumph.[111] Consequently, each panorama was admired by a vast number of people throughout the country and throughout Europe. One might suggest that the confrontation of wide audiences to this new media altered their perception of the metropolis and changed the way they looked at their own city. The reader of a tableau or a panorama can freely decide what to examine, and in what order. The extensive view with which spectators are first confronted teaches the public to give it a panoramic, sweeping first glance, and one might suggest that panoramas work as guides to the comprehension of the metropolis. Moreover, viewers could learn to concentrate on a single detail while simultaneously being aware of the unobserved totality that lay around them – this 'technique of observation' was

[109] Comment, *The Panorama*, 18.
[110] Comment, *The Panorama*, 54.
[111] Altick, *The Shows of London*, 155.

soon to become crucial in the modern urban environment. Panoramas thus called for a flâneurial mode of reading. I demonstrated earlier on that panoramas were in part a reaction to the new metropolis and may have set out as attempts to decipher the new urban environment, but one might also see them as media which participated in the making of a modern urban experience. According to Marc Desportes, panoramas gave the general public an insight into how to take in a land or cityscape, how to look out in the distance before the railway was invented and actually gave them access to real-life panoramas:

> Le panorama, ce mode de représentation né à la fin du dix-huitième siècle, procure un modèle aux premiers voyageurs ferroviaires et les aide à poser leur regard au loin, alors que les abords immédiats défilent trop vite pour pouvoir être regardés. En ce sens, le paysage d'une technique se forme selon un processus ouvert, influencé par la technique elle-même mais également par la culture contemporaine.[112]

One could also see panoramas as harbingers of the transport revolution that would soon take place, as something which taught the general public to look at cityscapes in a different way. Mobility being so central to panoramas, it was not long before moving panoramas were invented. Indeed, as some had criticized the lack of motion and little variety that a single canvas could offer, moving panoramas (panoramas painted on rolling cloth) soon began to make their apparition. In the exhibition world, 'the moving panorama was appearing under the newly invented term "peristrephic"'[113], while theatres began to use them as backdrops on a regular basis. Interestingly, the diorama,[114] which stemmed from the same desire for visual entertainment, soon changed its name to 'moving diorama', although the canvas itself did not move. The principal focus of the diorama was to blend the passage of time and movement into pictorial representations. The public wanted to be entertained and longed for the highest degree of illusion possible – Baudelaire mentions the diorama's '*brutal* and enormous *magic',*

[112] Marc Desportes, *Paysages en mouvement: transports et perception de l'espace XVIII^e^-XX^e^ siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 11. 'Panorama, a style of representation born at the end of the eighteenth century, gives the first railway travellers a visual model, helping them to fix their gaze into the distance, while their immediate surroundings flash by too quickly to be looked at. Thus the landscape of a technique forms itself through a process that is open, influenced by the technique itself but also by the contemporary culture.'

[113] Altick, *The Shows of London*, 201.

[114] 'Diorama, *n.*: A mode of scenic representation in which a picture, some portions of which are translucent, is viewed through an aperture, the sides of which are continued towards the picture; the light, which is thrown upon the picture from the roof, may be diminished or increased at pleasure, so as to represent the change from sunshine to cloudy weather, etc. […] The Diorama, invented by Daguerre and Bouton, was first exhibited in London, 29 Sept. 1823, the building being erected in Regent's Park. It was patented in 1824 by J. Arrowsmith.' OED.

which 'can impose a useful illusion.'[115] To emulate theatres, music, choirs, and gadgetry of all sorts often accompanied moving panoramas to make them more spectacular. It is interesting to note that, if originally, the idea behind panoramas was to distance one from the speed and clamour of the dissonant city, the din of the ever-shifting city rapidly caught up with panoramas, since they quickly became equipped with different types of sound-equipment or choirs. On the one hand, these sounds were used to guide the visitors towards a certain understanding of the city. On the other hand, they provided novel sources entertainment which sustained public interest and therefore the profitability of panoramas. This obsession with new sounds and new gadgetry calls attention to the fact transience was a fundamental feature of panoramas. Balzac, in *Le Père Goriot*, archly remarks on the sudden craze for these fashionable shows:

> La récente invention du Diorama, qui portait l'illusion de l'optique à un plus haut degré que dans les Panoramas, avait amené dans quelques ateliers de peinture la plaisanterie de parler en rama, espèce de charge qu'un jeune peintre, habitué de la pension Vauquer, y avait inoculée.
>
> - Eh bien! monsieurre Poiret, dit l'employé au Muséum, comment va cette petite santérama? […]
>
> - Il fait un fameux froitorama! dit Vautrin. Dérangez-vous donc, père Goriot! Que diable! votre pied prend toute la gueule du poêle.
>
> - Illustre monsieur Vautrin, dit Bianchon, pourquoi dites-vous froitorama? il y a une faute, c'est froidorama.
>
> - Non, dit l'employé du Muséum, c'est froitorama, par la règle: j'ai froit aux pieds. […]
>
> - Ah! ah! voici une fameuse soupeaurama, dit Poiret en voyant Christophe qui entrait en tenant respectueusement le potage. [116]

[115] Baudelaire, 'Salon de 1859', *OC*, vol. 1, 1085. 'Je désire être ramené vers les dioramas dont la magie brutale et énorme sait m'imposer une utile illusion.'

[116] Honoré de Balzac, *Le Père Goriot*, in Pierre-Georges Castex (ed.), *La Comédie humaine*, 12 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Collection 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade', 1976-1981), vol. 3 [1976], 91. 'The recent invention of the Diorama, carrying optical illusion a stage further than the Panoramas, has prompted the comic practice in some artists' studios of adding '*rama*' to words and a young painter who frequented the Maison Vauquer had injected the infection there. 'Well! *Monsieurre* Poiret,' said the Museum man, 'how is your little *healthorama*? […] 'It's devilish *coltorama*,' said Vautrin. 'Move over, Père Goriot! Devil take it! Your foot is blocking all the heat from the stove!' 'Illustrious Monsieur Vautrin,' said Bianchon, 'why do you say *coltorama*? That's wrong, it's *coldorama*.' 'No,' said the Muséum man, it's *coltorama* according to the rules: I have colt toes.' […] 'Ah, there's a fine *souporama*,' said Poiret, seeing Christophe coming in respectfully, carrying the soup.' ' (A. J. Krailsheimer (ed., trans.), *Père Goriot* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2009), 45-46).

Mobility and changeability were at the core of panoramas, but it also meant that in the intensely competitive sphere of London entertainment, their success or survival depended on novelty and constant innovation. However, they did survive admirably well, to the extent that that they appear to have influenced the public's modes of perception and participated in the new modes of seeing which emerged at the time. Jonathan Crary has argued that processes of viewing underwent a profound transformation in the early nineteenth century thanks to the new understanding of the eye's capacity to retain after-images. According to him, new media using this understanding (dioramas for instance) boosted the entertainment industry, which in turn radically altered the way in which the general public viewed and imagined the world. In *Household Words*, Dickens praised panoramas and dioramas for their didactic value:

> When I was a boy […] the gigantic-moving-panorama or diorama mode of conveyance, which I have principally adopted (all my means of conveyance have been pictorial), had then not been attempted. It is a delightful characteristic of these times, that new and cheap means are continually being devised, for conveying the results of actual experience, to those who are unable to obtain such experiences for themselves; and to bring them within the reach of the people – emphatically of the people; for it is they at large who are addressed in these endeavours, and not exclusive audiences. Hence … even if I see a run on an idea, like the panorama one, it awakens no ill-humour within me, but gives me pleasant thoughts. Some of the best results of actual travel are suggested by such means to those whose lot it is to stay at home. New worlds open out to them, beyond their little worlds, and widen their range of reflection, information, sympathy, and interest.[117]

Dickens uses the words 'actual experience,' thereby underlining the useful value of panoramas. These words indicate that to go to a panorama was to experience cityscape (or landscape) in a different way, but was also an activity which, in itself, became part of the new urban experience. Panoramas were part of an attempt to understand the new unstable city-environment, but the sheer number of panorama-exhibitions that were held throughout the century point to the impossibility of attaining this totalizing dream of stability. Their all-encompassing ambition was unattainable because of the ever-changing nature of the metropolis. Their ambition to 'capture' the city meant that they themselves became absorbed

[117] Charles Dickens, *Household Words*, 19 vols (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1850-1859), vol. 1 (1850), 73-77.

into this new fast-moving city environment. In a way, they appropriated the restlessness that, at first glance, they appeared to try to resolve. Panoramas became part of the city's ever-shifting canvas, while simultaneously developing new modes of envisaging this modern environment. Indeed, panoramas rapidly transformed into shows which went beyond pure visual experience, they became a multimedia technology which had multiple effects on the senses. There was an interesting reciprocity between panoramas and the urban environment, in that they helped contemporaries to understand the city while also contributing to accelerating urban change. Panoramas responded to new technologies by adopting them, and going to a panorama became part of this ever-changing urban experience.

Let us now turn to the great number of sketches which circulated in Britain during the Victorian period. First of all, one should insist on the mobility of the media itself, especially in cities, since each sketch issued in a newspaper or a journal would pass into innumerable hands, as literacy had greatly improved. This practice was already widespread in the eighteenth century, as this extract of Addison's *Spectator* illustrates, but print-traffic considerably accelerated in the nineteenth century:

> From hence, accordingly as [sheets of paper] are stain'd with News or Politicks, they fly thro' the Town in *Post-Men, Post-Boys, Daily-Courants, Reviews, Medleys*, and *Examiners*. Men, Women, and Children contend who shall be the first Bearers of them, and get their daily Sustenance by spreading them. […] If I do not take care to obviate some of my witty Readers, they will be apt to tell me, that my Paper, after it is thus printed and published, is still beneficial to the Publick on several Occasions.[118]

Sketches displayed in shop-windows were avidly gazed at by the general public, hurriedly poured over by the street vendors who sold them, leisurely peered at by those who bought them first hand and by coffee-shop customers or club members, and then again enjoyed by the vast majority of people who purchased them second-hand or third-hand, or eventually acquired them for free. This endlessly multipliable and open medium consequently profoundly impacted on the population. They were often light and entertaining as well as visually appealing, and thus drew a very wide public to them. Sketches engaged both artists and the public in the dynamic aspects of the print revolution, and contributed to the blurring

[118] Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, No. 367, Thursday, May 1, 1712, in Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, *The Spectator* [1711-1714], ed. Henry Morley, 3 vols (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1891), vol. 2.

of boundaries that went hand in hand with it, as Lauster has rightly pointed out: 'The printed surface itself becomes eloquent; it bespeaks a revolutionary present in which boundaries of all kinds have become fluid, notably those between national cultures, 'educated' and 'uneducated' classes, book and journal, as well as image and type.'[119] Sketches also radically blurred the boundaries between pictorial space and textual space, and actually combined them in the most remarkable and innovative way, thereby allowing the reader/observer's gaze to come into contact with unfamiliar visual forms and teaching them to decipher visual signs in a new way. Verbal and visual sketches combined to an unprecedented extent in the nineteenth century, as Janin underlined in the introduction to *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*:

> Pendant longtemps, le peintre allait ainsi de son côté, pendant que l'écrivain marchait aussi de son côté; ils n'avaient pas encore songé l'un l'autre à se réunir, afin de mettre en commun leur observation, leur ironie, leur sang-froid et leur malice. A la fin cependant, et quand chacun d'eux eut obéi à sa vocation d'observateur, ils consentirent d'un commun accord à cette grande tâche, l'étude des mœurs contemporaines. De cette association charmante il devait résulter le livre que voici.[120]

In London, George Cruikshank and Charles Dickens collaborated closely to produce both *Sketches by Boz* and *Oliver Twist*. Later in his life, Cruikshank famously claimed in the pamphlet 'The Artist and the Author' to have originated Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and Ainsworth's *The Miser's Daughter*: 'I, the Artist, suggested to the Authors of these works the original idea, or subject, for them to write out – furnishing, at the same time, the principal characters and the scenes.'[121] This claim may not be as fantastic as it then sounded – both artists were intimate friends and spent a considerable amount of time together when the *Sketches* and *Oliver Twist* were produced. Interestingly, Dickens praised the 'assistance and companionship' of the illustrator in the preface to the first edition of the *Sketches* (SBB, 7), while Cruikshank portrayed himself and Dickens several times together in the *Sketches*. In the frontispiece to the first edition, he depicted Dickens and himself observing the London crowd

[119] Lauster, *Sketches of the Nineteenth Century*, 58.
[120] Janin, introduction in *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, vol. 1, xv. 'For a long time, the painter went his own way, while the writer also went his own way; it had not yet occurred to them to combine their observations, irony, level-headedness and mischievousness. However, eventually, after answering the calling of observation, they mutually agreed to undertake this great task, the study of contemporary mores. The present book resulted from this charming association.'
[121] George Cruikshank, 'The Artist and the Author: A Statement of Facts by the Artist, George Cruikshank, Proving that the distinguished Author, Mr. W. Harrison Ainsworth, is "labouring under singular delusion" with respect to the origin of 'The Miser's Daughter," "The Tower of London," etc.' (London: Bell & Daldy, 1872).

from an ascending hot-air balloon (SBB, 1), and in 'Public Dinners,' he represented them observing London society together (SBB, 194). Cruikshank's sketches and Dickens's words complement each other, creating a new whole which can be deciphered by the reader and interpreted in several ways. 'The Sunday Times (23 April 1837) agreed: Boz "is with the pen what his illustrator, Cruikshank, is with the pencil."'[122] Later on, publications such as *Punch or The London Charivari* (1841) or the *Illustrated London Magazine* (1842) would combine words and images in an intricate and profoundly innovative way. Readers thus had to learn to decipher this new form of language. Alex Potts gives an insightful description of these new sketches blending words and images together:

> The very look of the pages gives a clear sense of the relation between image and verbal narrative that is being set up. The illustrations are close-ups, distinctive details or glimpsed vistas, whose rounded format and blurred edges fading off into the page often make them look suggestively like the momentary view caught in the lens of a telescope. The sense of a living, moving totality is conveyed by the text, into which are inserted odd visual excerpts from the scene being described, pictorial fragments of a larger whole.[123]

The experience of deciphering a sketch described here is very similar to the experience of observing a city scene, and sketches almost exclusively depicted urban episodes. Sketches make the reader's gaze go back and forth between the picture and the text, close-ups and background. One may suggest that this new mobile gaze fostered by the multiplication of sketches offered contemporaries analytical tools which helped them interpret the new ever-changing city. One may also see sketches as a medium that not only attempted to decipher the bustling city, but which also produced and fostered this urban modernity. For instance, sketches themselves could be combined in different orders, thereby creating different meanings, new connections. Dickens' *Sketches By Boz* is a radically heterogeneous composition which brings together sketches, scenes, character descriptions and tales, which were all originally published separately. Danielle Coriale called attention to the extremely hybrid nature of this composition:

> Dickens attempted to impose a structure on the sketches that would give the illusion of textual stability and authorial control, the signature features of his mature fiction. […] *Sketches by Boz* (1836), presents readers with a startling

[122] Schlicke, 'Risen like a Rocket', 4.
[123] Potts, 'Picturing the Modern Metropolis', 45.

> assemblage of tales and vignettes that can best be described as a montage. When taken together, the fifty-six sketches originally written for different newspapers and popular periodicals form a mixed or heterogeneous work, a remarkable hybrid that combines journalistic reportage with excessive sentiment and pathos, places elaborate illustrations alongside corresponding text, and embeds static scenes among fluid, narrative passages.[124]

Here again, the order in which sketches are presented to the readers can alter their perception of them, and one might suggest that sketches encourage the public to devise new ways of navigating through them. The sketch thus seems singularly well-adapted to the new, fluctuating city. Lauster underlined the sketch's profoundly modern and immediate nature:

> By virtue of their non-fictionality, present-tense and/or dramatic narrative, implicit or explicit reference to print and graphic images and frequent association with periodical or serial publication, they play a central part in embodying, capturing and decoding a present consisting of a multitude of signs that indicate movement and change. The nature of their depiction 'before the reader's eyes', which parallels the process of 'reading' both literally and in terms of making sense, means that the reader of a sketch is always an observer and therefore involved in the dynamic present.[125]

The mobility of sketches is ideally suited to the pace of the modern vibrant urban space, and I would agree with Lauster in saying that sketches 'equip the nineteenth-century citizen for a modernity which is, in many ways, yet to develop in material terms,'[126] – sketches provide us with a new 'grammar of modernity.' Could it be Baudelaire's dream of a new form of language?

> Quel est celui de nous qui n'a pas, dans ses jours d'ambition, rêvé le miracle d'une prose poétique, musicale sans rythme et sans rime, assez souple et assez heurtée pour s'adapter aux mouvements lyriques de l'âme, aux ondulations de la rêverie, aux soubresauts de la conscience? [127]

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[124] Danielle Coriale, '*Sketches by Boz*, So Frail a Machine', *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 48, 4 (Autumn 2008), 801-812, (p. 801).
[125] Lauster, *Sketches of the Nineteenth Century*, 28.
[126] Lauster, *Sketches of the Nineteenth Century*, 309.
[127] Baudelaire, 'Préface', *Le Spleen de Paris*, *OC*, I, 275. 'Which one of us, in his moments of ambition, has not dreamed of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical, without rhythm and without rhyme, supple enough and rugged enough to adapt itself to the lyrical impulses of the soul, the undulations of reverie, the jibes of conscience? (*Paris Spleen*, trans. Louise Varese (New York: New Directions, 1970), ix.)

However, sketches did not only teach contemporaries how to decipher their dynamic new metropolis. The fact that they were published at an ever-increasing speed in 'periodical[s] or serial publication[s]' was essential. The fast-paced production of 'locust swarms of print'[128] which assailed the city was both a product and reflection of urban modernity and rapidity. Thanks to industrial printing presses, cities were flooded with newspapers, pamphlets, adverts and serials, which in itself became part of the experience of modernity. Sketches, it seems, were not only a solution corresponding to modernity, they were also actively producing modernity and fuelling the process of change which characterized the restless metropolis.

Sketches and panoramas were not only attempts to understand the restless city, as new technologies, they produced a form of modernity themselves. Experiencing these technologies became part and parcel of the dynamic urban experience, and their extreme mobility as well as the mobility they entailed taught contemporaries new techniques of observation, which became part of the *flâneur*'s mode of gazing.

2. Walking and technologies

Along with the mobility of these new media, the mobility of contemporaries themselves transformed the Victorians' modes of observation. The flâneurial viewpoint – be it that of the public, the artists, or the writers – played a crucial part in the emergence of these new ways of seeing.

It is interesting to note that panoramas and dioramas seemed to disappear around the time the railway started to develop, as Wolfgang Schivelbusch noted:

> What the opening of major railroads provided in reality – the easy accessibility of distant places – was attempted in illusion, in the decades immediately preceding that opening, by the 'panoramic' and 'dioramic' shows and gadgets. These were designed to provide, by showing views of distant landscapes, cities, and exotic scenes, a substitute for those still expensive and onerous journeys. That the diorama fad died out in Paris around 1840, more or less at the same

[128] Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979), 62.

> time that the first great railways were opened would seem corroborative evidence for the presumed connection.[129]

It seems the railway took over from panoramas and dioramas and went on transforming the public's modes of observation by making the observer mobile. Panoramic perception remained, but with the railway, the motion generated by the train was incorporated into the observer's perception. Thus, from the 1840s onwards, 'that mobility of vision […] became a prerequisite for the 'normality' of panoramic vision. This vision no longer experienced evanescence: evanescent reality had become the new reality.'[130] Yet, even before the 1840s, mobility was at the heart of panoramic vision, or more precisely, of the panoramist's vision. As was said before, panoramas were able to associate what could be seen at a close range with what could be seen from afar, but to achieve that effect, panoramists could not just sketch the city from a single viewpoint. Hornor famously slept atop St. Paul's Cathedral's main tower, but this was not the full story. He walked the streets of London tirelessly to sketch in detail every monument that would appear on the final panorama, as Bernard Comment indicates:

> The sketches from a distance, from the top of the cathedral, were subsequently checked out on the spot by the painter. He roamed the streets and squares, examined buildings, studied the way they had been decorated, inspected each tiny detail, collected details invisible to the naked eye – but not to the camera obscura – from a vantage point he had chosen for himself. In the Colosseum, the combination of views from near and far common to the panoramic genre found an unusual complement: telescopes 'arranged so as to make it easier to discern the objects in the far distance that are painted in such great detail.'[131]

What this anecdote reveals is that even where panoramic views were concerned, the mobility of the artist was central to the perception of the city space. The mobility of the spectators (or virtual *flâneurs*) strolling around the platforms at panorama exhibitions replicates that of the artist meandering through the city to chart its streets and frame its finer details. According to Jonathan Crary, panoramas underlined a change in perspective because they 'clearly broke with the localized point of view of perspective painting of the camera obscura, allowing the spectator an ambulatory ubiquity.'[132] Even the later pictorial panoramas which were 'mobile,'

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[129] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, 'Panoramic Journey', in *Panoramic Travel, the Industrialization and Perception of Time and Space* [1977] (Berkeley: University California Press, 1986), 62.
[130] Schivelbusch, *Panoramic Travel*, 64.
[131] Comment, *The Panorama*, 113-114.
[132] Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 113.

that is, which could be unrolled before the eye of the spectator, echoed the mobility of the artist/urban stroller. Margaret A. Rose mentions a photograph of Alexander von Humbolt next to a telescope on wheels at Gaertner's Berlin Panorama, which calls attention to this relation between walking and the panorama. According to her, this photograph might represent an actual telescope used by visitors at that panorama-exhibition, but it might also 'be symbolic of the peripatetic nature of the gaze of the viewers within the picture as well as of those of Gaertner's completed panorama without.'[133] Benjamin also remarked on this connection between the panorama and the walking subject: 'Announcing an upheaval in the relation of art and technology, panoramas are […] an expression of a new attitude to life. The city dweller, […] attempts to bring the countryside into town. In panoramas, the city opens out to landscape – as it will do later, in subtler fashion, for the *flâneurs*' (AP, 6). For Benjamin, 'the old Romantic sentiment for landscape dissolves and a new Romantic conception of landscape emerges – of landscape that seems, rather, to be a cityscape' (AP, 420). In this formulation, which borrows from the dioramic imagery, Benjamin shows how, through the gaze of the walking subject, the Romantic ideal of nature is translated into a modern, visual form of representation of the city. What these elements show is that when visiting panoramas, contemporaries were called upon to become *flâneurs* strolling through artificial cities with a new eye.

The central function of the artist's or of the spectator's mobility is of course much more prominent in sketches. The transportation revolution which took place in the nineteenth century increased the public's mobility and thus broadened their experience of the metropolis, which was then reflected in the art and literature they favoured. Walking became a central feature of the ubiquitous sketches published in the periodicals of the time. The first half of the century is truly the age of urban perambulation. A number of publications use the figure of a walker as their protagonist, Dickens's *Sketches by Boz* being of course the most famous example. Let us for a moment dwell on Parisian print culture to illustrate this statement. As mentioned earlier, in *Le Diable à Paris*, Satan sends Flammèche to explore the French capital to recruit sketchers of modern life. The city can best me be made legible through a mode of vision which combines the totalizing overview of the panoramist and the penetrating local insight of the urban walker. Later in the century, Baudelaire chooses Constantin Guy as the

[133] Margaret A. Rose (ed.), *Flâneurs & Idlers: Louis Huart, 'Physiologie du flâneur' (1841); Albert Smith, 'The Natural History of the Idler upon Town' (1848)* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2007), 69.

most emblematic *flâneur* of his age, a sketcher-artist from whom urban peripatetic journeys and sketching them underlie his artistic practice:

> Il prépare ainsi vingt dessins à la fois avec une pétulance et une joie charmantes, amusantes même pour lui; les croquis s'empilent et se superposent par dizaines, par centaines, par milliers. De temps à autre il les parcourt, les feuillette, les examine, et puis il en choisit quelques-uns dont il augmente plus ou moins l'intensité, dont il charge les ombres et allume progressivement les lumières. […] Notre singulier artiste exprime à la fois le geste et l'attitude solennelle ou grotesque des êtres et leur explosion lumineuse dans l'espace.[134]

I would argue that Boz, like Constantin Guys in Baudelaire's description, is an exemplary *flâneur* – or Painter of Modern life – because he is able to sketch 'at once the attitude and the gesture of living beings, whether solemn or grotesque, and their luminous explosion in space.' The prerequisite of nearly all of Dickens's *Sketches* is the narrator's capacity to walk freely, which sets him apart from those who 'brush quickly by, steadily plodding on to business, or cheerfully running after pleasure' ('Shops and Their Tenants, SBB, 80). Interestingly, walking the city-streets was the source of Dickens's creativity, as he confessed to Forster in a letter written during his stay in Switzerland:

> I can't express how much I want these [London streets]. It seems as if they supplied something to my brain, which it cannot bear, when busy, to lose. For a week or a fortnight I can write prodigiously in a retired place (as at Broadstairs), and a day in London sets me up again and starts me. But the toil and labour of writing, day after day, without that magic lantern is immense![135]

There is a striking relationship throughout Dickens' work between the activity of walking and his own creativity. This is particularly obvious in *Sketches By Boz* – in 'Shops and Their Tenants', the protagonist insists on the paramount importance of walking:

> What inexhaustible food for speculation, do the streets of London afford! We never were able to agree with Sterne in pitying the man who could travel from Dan to Beersheba, and say that all was barren; we have not the slightest

[134] Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', vol. 2, 700. 'He works in this way on twenty drawings at a time, with an impatience and a delight that are a joy to watch – and are amusing even for him. The sketches pile up, one on top of the other – in their tens, hundreds, thousands. Every now and then he will run through them and examine them, and then select a few in order to carry them a stage further, to intensify the shadows and gradually to heighten the lights. […] This extraordinary artist is able to express at once the attitude and the gesture of living beings, whether solemn or grotesque, and their luminous explosion in space.' (trans. Mayne, 17.)

[135] Forster, *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, IV, 612.

> commiseration for the man who can take up his hat and stick, and walk from Covent-garden to St. Paul's Churchyard, and back into the bargain, without deriving some amusement--we had almost said instruction--from his perambulation (SBB, 80).

Boz finds an interest in the spectacle of life unfolding in the streets, he is a *flâneur* who 'enacts the fantasy of the untrammelled individual for his readers, finding interest in what the man on his way to business cannot take the time to see. He is the man whose business is his pleasure – one who finds his capital in what must be, for others, incidental: in the interstices of their lives.'[136] The strolling protagonist gives us access to the multitude of types that are to be found in the city, and his ambulatory freedom is at the core of these new ways of observing the metropolis. Lytton Bulwer's *England and the English* (1833) is one of the most famous sketch publications of that period, and depicts hundreds of 'pen and pencil' portraits of professional types, accompanied by the author's own verbal sketch of each type. For Sieburth, the sedentary reader of these physiologies is presented with a *flâneur* who moves through the metropolis, presenting a panoramic view of it through his peregrinations.[137] Sketches were an ideal way to try and understand this fast-changing society on the verge of modernity, and walking was an activity ideally suited to this sketching process.

Sketches also reflect the haphazard manner in which contemporaries learned to gaze at and apprehend the city – the gaze of the urban walker is captivated by multiple elements, and thus leads him on a meandering journey throughout the city. In 'Our Next-door Neighbour' for instance, Boz's steps are guided by the noteworthy appearance of house doors. The structure of each piece, according to Boz, is guided by his aimless wanderings: 'We were walking leisurely down the Old Bailey, some time ago, when, as we passed this identical gate, it was opened by the officiating turnkey' (SBB, 230). To take another example, *Life in London*'s subtitle evokes Tom and Jerry's 'rambles and sprees through the metropolis,' which is an indication that walking is at the core of the book – it is actually its main narrative thread, the activity which links up the various and contrasted areas which Tom and Jerry visit. Indeed, walking is 'an act that will join together socially and geographically disparate parts of

[136] Audrey Jaffe, *Vanishing Points*: *Dickens, Narrative, and the Subject of Omniscience* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991). <http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft038n99m1&chunk.id=ch1&toc.id=ch4&brand=eschol > [accessed 22/05/2010]

[137] See Sieburth, 'Same Difference: The French Physiologies, 1840-1842', 163-200.

the city to produce a "story."' [138] Walking, like sketch-reading, is also an activity which blurs the previously clear-cut boundaries and distinctions between social classes. Boz, although he constantly tries to distinguish himself from the lower classes he comes into contact with, is constantly drawn to London's underworld. In sketches, walking both combines and fragments the urban space. The sketch 'The Parlour Orator' naturally starts with Boz strolling leisurely about the streets, more precisely 'lounging one evening, down Oxford-street, Holborn, Cheapside, Coleman-street, Finsbury Square, and so on, with the intention of returning westward, by Pentonville and the New Road.' Remembering 'an old, quiet, decent public house, which [he had] passed but a moment before', he decides to retrace his steps and 'solace [him]self with a glass of ale' (SBB, 272). The parlour he steps into not only becomes a subject for his sketch, it becomes discursively related to all the other spaces which constitute the city. In most sketches, it is the activity of walking which connects different London characters or different London areas. Moreover, walking reinforces the sketch's authenticity – it gives the impression that the sketcher has not composed the scene, but simply chanced upon it. One might say that sketches were more acute and incisive than other forms of depiction of the city because of the mobility of the sketch-artist – there is somehow a sense in which the sketcher has an access to some kind of truth otherwise not available. The sketch appears to be the most ideally suited medium to convey the experience of the changing metropolis, since 'by making the observer's own mobility part of the mode of observation, sketches indicate their superiority to the viewing media that had dynamised static surfaces, or disclosed life beneath surfaces, in the first place.'[139] What the *flâneur*'s unprecedented mobility enables him to do is to alternate between the panoramic mode of seeing and the sketcher's mode of observing the city. If one now re-examines Balzac's *flâneur*'s earlier-cited panoramic description of Paris in *Le Père Goriot*, one might note that Rastignac's macroscopic gaze effortlessly transforms into the microscopic gaze of the sketcher – his quasi-scientific scrutiny zooms in and latches onto the 'humming hive' of a Parisian apartment: 'Ses yeux s'attachèrent presque avidement entre la colonne de la place Vendôme et le dôme des Invalides, là où vivait ce beau monde dans lequel il avait voulu pénétrer.'[140] To take another example, the anonymous author of 'Le

[138] Sambudh Sen, 'Hogarth, Egan, Dickens, and the Making of an Urban Aesthetic', *Representations*, 103 (Summer 2008), 84-108, (p. 97).
[139] Lauster, *Sketches of the Nineteenth Century*, 83.
[140] Balzac, *Le Père Goriot*, in *La Comédie humaine*, vol. 3 [1976], 290. 'His eyes fastened almost hungrily on the area between the column in the Place Vendôme and the dome of the Invalides, home to the fashionable society to which he had sought to gain admission.' (A. J. Krailsheimer (ed., trans.), *Père Goriot* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2009), 263).

Flâneur à Paris' epitomizes the centrality of mobility in a statement which brings together the sketch (being a physiology itself), the panorama, and the *flâneur*: 'Sous quel aspect inattendu s'offre à vos yeux, avec un pareil démonstrateur, le panorama mobile qui vous environne!'[141] By perusing sketches composed by and/or about the mobile *flâneur*, and by looking at the city through his eyes, contemporaries can gain exceptional insight ('inattendu') into the workings of the restless urban panorama which is 'unrolled' before them. This sentence also highlights several important facets of the *flâneur* – recorder and entertainer, discloser and interpreter. He is both the rigorous camera-eye which captures images and the 'démonstrateur,' the presenter who exhibits the diorama ('mobile panorama'), sets it into motion (and lives off this activity). He reveals and foregrounds a reality which would remain invisible or inaccessible without his visual mediation, but he is also the 'démonstrateur' which I would now translate as 'conjurer,' who provides the public with an interpretation of the city, who endows it with meaning. Thus, the *flâneur* also emerged out of this dialectical culture that moved between the panorama and the sketch, which meant he was ideally suited to the exploration of the modern metropolis. The literary figure of the *flâneur* had the potential to give readers access to these two ways of seeing. What the *flâneur* thus also seemed to achieve was to pull together visual and literary culture.

3. A New Aesthetics of mobility

We have established that the sketcher or *flâneur* was in an ideal position to depict the changing city. One might add that conversely, the gaze of the urban walker also set the city in motion. As Epstein Nord has judiciously remarked, Dickens's sketches are 'often the temporal unfolding of what is initially affirmed pictorially, in the instant of juxtaposition within a Sketch. An image or vignette becomes or implies the progress of a character, and Boz thus unfolds what appears frozen and static.'[142] Boz the *flâneur* often makes the typical anonymous urban encounter or a scene witnessed on the street the starting point of a sketch, and them transforms it into a story, as is the case in 'The Drunkard's Death,' or 'Meditations in Monmouth Street.' Walking, in this sense, enables the sketcher to combine disjointed scenes into a continuous whole, and thereby to create something new. We could draw a

[141] Anon., 'Le Flâneur à Paris' in Camille Ladvocat, (ed.), *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un*, 15 vols (Paris: Ladvocat, 1831-1834), vol. 6, 102. 'When such a guide shows you the moving panorama which surrounds you, what unexpected vistas are offered to your eye!'
[142] Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets*, 62.

parallel between Dickens's sketching methods and Michel de Certeau's analysis of walking. Here again, the parallel between walking and writing is quite striking:

> La geste cheminatoire joue avec les organisations spatiales. […] Elle y crée de l'ombre et de l'équivoque. Elle y insinue la multitude de ses références et citations […]. Elle y est elle-même l'effet de rencontres et d'occasions successives qui ne cessent de l'altérer et d'en faire le blason de l'autre, c'est-à-dire le colporteur de ce qui surprend, traverse ou séduit ses parcours. Ces divers aspects instaurent une rhétorique. Ils la définissent même.[143]

Taking De Certeau's ideas into account here, we might say that a new discourse stems from Dickens's wandering writing, as well as from his wandering walks. De Certeau's use of the words 'joue,' 'équivoque,' 'surprend,' and 'séduit,' point to the importance of the element of play, novelty and creation which is at the heart of meandering, which is equally important in the context of Dickens's writing since the latter performs the same dance of circumvolution and creativity in his own sketches. The meanderings of Boz's prose create a new form of expression, just as urban walking creates a new type of spatial phrasing – this parallel seems to enhance the connection between Boz's wandering writing and the process of walking itself. Walking, like writing, is a mechanism which creates novelty: 'la circulation physique a la fonction itinérante des "superstitions" d'hier ou d'aujourd'hui. Le voyage (comme la marche) est le substitut des légendes qui ouvraient l'espace à de l'autre.'[144]

Just like in De Certeau's 'Marches dans la ville,' the urban walker of the *Sketches* literally constructs the space of the city with his footsteps, which interweave with those of the rest of the crowd into a 'poetic geography.' Boz's meanderings through the city parallel the progression of his sketches – they 'traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories. In this respect, narrative structures have the status of spatial syntaxes.'[145] According to de Certeau,

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[143] De Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien*, 152. 'The long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations. […] It creates shadows and ambiguities within them. It inserts its multitudinous references and citations into them […]. Within them it is itself the effect of successive encounters and occasions that constantly alter it and make it the other's blazon: in other words, it is like a peddler, carrying something surprising, transverse or attractive compared with the usual choice. These diverse aspects provide the basis of a rhetoric. They can even be said to define it.' (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, 101.)

[144] De Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien*, 160. 'Physical moving about has the itinerant *function* of yesterday's or today's superstitions. Travel (like walking), is a substitute for the legends that used to open up space to something different.' (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, 106-7.)

[145] De Certeau, 'Spatial Stories' in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 115.

the urban space cannot be apprehended in a single gaze, but has to be assimilated through a rhetoric of walking, together with its associated mechanisms of dreams, memories and fables. This is precisely how Boz proceeds in his sketches, and this is especially visible in 'Meditations in Monmouth Street.' Boz seems to be roaming the general area, and then to be drawing closer and closer to a shop, until eventually his eyes 'alight on a few suits of clothes ranged outside a shop window,' (SBB, 98) and his imagination takes over:

> We love to walk among these extensive groves of the illustrious dead, and to indulge in the speculations to which they give rise; now fitting a deceased coat, then a dead pair of trousers, and anon the mortal remains of a gaudy waistcoat, upon some being of our own conjuring up, and endeavouring, from the shape and fashion of the garment itself, to bring its former owner before our mind's eye. (SBB, 98)

Similarly, in 'The Hospital Patient', Boz catches a glimpse of the 'glimmering of the low-burning lamps' coming from a public hospital as he is rambling through the streets. This reminds him of an anecdote which had started in Covent Garden and which had taken him to the Police Office, and then on to another Public hospital. It is *flânerie* which connects all these disjointed spaces together, and which sets the writer's and the readers' imagination in motion. Dickens's sketches are a reflection of how contemporaries were learning to apprehend the city through a complex combination of walking, observing, abstraction and imagination. Like the *flâneur* described in 'Le Flâneur à Paris' and 'Le Peintre de la vie modern,' Boz absorbs, refracts and recreates the modern environment. Sketches pick up on technological metaphors such as that of the kaleidoscope (an optical apparatus invented by Sir David Brewster in 1817) to convey a sense of the work that the *flâneur*/sketcher performs: 'les jeux du kaleidoscope ne sont pas plus indéterminés, plus capricieux, plus multipliés que ceux de son esprit.'[146] '[Le peintre de la vie moderne est] un kaléidoscope doué de conscience, qui, à chacun de ses mouvements, représente la vie multiple et la grâce mouvante de tous les éléments de la vie.'[147] Thus, these creative and imaginative sketches further set the city into motion and lay the foundations for the urban aesthetics which would develop at the

[146] Anon., 'Le Flâneur à Paris', *Paris ou Le Livre des cent-et-un* [1831-1834] (Frankfurt: Schmeber, 1832), vol. 6, 104. 'The play of the kaleidoscope is just as indetermined, fickle, and diverse as the workings of his mind.'
[147] Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', vol. 2, 692. '[The painter of modern life is] a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life.' (trans. Mayne, 9.)

end of the century and which would also be intrinsically linked to the flâneurial way of seeing.[148]

4. Self-reflectiveness and reciprocity

Because sketch-reading became part of the urban fabric and participated in the mutation of the city which they were attempting to reflect, the relation between the cityscape and its modes of representation has to be envisaged as dialectical. The mirroring effect between sketches and panoramas and the urban environment was a dynamic process. In their attempt to reflect the contemporary metropolis, these new technologies adopted a 'grammar of modernity,' and self-reflection became crucial in this process. People did not only reproduce the city in sketches and panoramas, they also repeatedly represented themselves in the act of looking at the city. It seems that the relation between cities and urban dwellers was becoming increasingly mediated. As was mentioned before, Hornor's painted canvas at the Colosseum was only part of the attraction. The organisers went to great lengths to reproduce the exact set up and working conditions of the panoramist at work, as Comment indicates: 'the hut Hornor had used to make his studies was on show on the top platform, where fresh air circulated to create the illusion that the spectator was at the top of the dome of St. Paul's.'[149] In the Colosseum, what was important was to represent the dual process of looking and re-presenting – what was being replicated was the scene of representation. Both sketches and panoramas remind their public that their gaze replicates the artist's gaze, that they, too, are *looking*. The pervasive presence of the figure of the *flâneur* in visual and verbal sketches throughout the century seems to corroborate this statement. What we get through the figure of the *flâneur* is not a picture of the city, but the picture of someone in the process of observing the city. In *Sketches by Boz*, Cruikshank's illustration of 'The Streets, Morning,'[150] one can clearly discern in the background such a gentleman (who might be Boz himself), leaning against a post, observing the early-morning scene unfolding before his eyes. It might be the 'post-leaning gentleman' mentioned in the subsequent sketch 'Seven Dials:' 'Pass through St. Giles's in the evening of a week-day, there they are […], leaning against posts. Walk through Seven Dials on Sunday morning: there they are again, drab or light corduroy trousers, Blucher

[148] For more details on the links between this new urban aesthetics and *flânerie*, see Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues, *Propos sur la flânerie* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2009), 5-6, quoted in the introduction to chapter 2.
[149] Comment, *The Panorama*, 28.
[150] See Figure 9. George Cruikshank, 'The Streets. Morning', *Sketches by Boz*, 1836, etching on paper.

boots, blue coats, and great yellow waistcoats, leaning against posts' (SBB, 93-94). The most striking illustration of the self-reflective quality of sketches is probably the fashion for *Physiologies* – they combined entertainment and information which was often critically self-observing. In a very astute article, Nathalie Preiss-Basset[151] appropriately referred to them as 'miroirs en miettes' ('mirrors in smithereens'). The title-page of Bulwer's *England and the English* displays a motto by Lady Mary Montagu which endorses this self-reflecting stance:

> Every now and then we should examine ourselves: self-amendment is the offspring of self-knowledge. Self-amendment is the offspring of self-knowledge. But foreigners do not *examine* our condition; they only glance at its surface. Why should we print volumes upon other countries and be silent upon our own? Why traverse the world and neglect the phenomena around us? Why should the spirit of our researches be a lynx in Africa and a mole in England? Why, in one word, should a nation never be criticised by a native? [152]

This introducing statement endorses self-inspection and aims at equating physiologies with travel literature. The inquisitive methods of the traveller abroad in a foreign and exotic land must be summoned to inspect one's own city, as Gavarni's earlier-mentioned frontispiece of *Le Diable à Paris* suggests, with Flammèche standing over the map of Paris like an otherworldly visitor casting a fresh eye over the city.[153] The afore-mentioned photograph of the renewed natural scientist and world traveller Humboldt next to a telescope at Gaertner's Berlin Panorama[154] foregrounds the fact that in panoramas, the gaze of the explorer must be applied to the city. Victor Fournel, in his 1855 chapter on *flânerie*, used the metaphor of the most archetypal explorer, Christopher Columbus, to exemplify and elucidate the task of the urban explorer: 'C'est un peu en flânant sur l'Océan que Christophe Colomb a découvert l'Amérique. Il reste bien des Amériques nouvelles à découvrir, en flânant à sa manière dans certains domaines encore inexplorés de l'Océan parisien.'[155] To occupy the place of the outsider might give us an access to a different, deeper, hidden aspect of the city and of the self, as Barthes pointed out:

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[151] Nathalie Preiss-Basset, 'Les physiologies, un miroir en miettes', in *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes. Panorama du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1993), 62.
[152] Bulwer, *England and the English*, title page.
[153] See Figure 2. Paul Gavarni, Frontispiece of *Le Diable à Paris*, 1841, wood engraving.
[154] Rose, *Flâneurs & Idlers*, 69.
[155] Fournel, *Ce qu'on voit dans les rues de Paris*, 261-2. 'One might say it is by *flâneuring* on the Ocean that Christopher Columbus discovered America. There are many new Americas still to be discovered by *flâneuring* in one's own way through some unchartered territories of the Parisian Ocean.'

> Vivre dans un pays dont on ne connaît pas la langue, y vivre largement, en dehors des cantonnements touristiques, est la plus dangereuse des aventures […]: c'est plus périlleux (pour le 'sujet') que d'affronter la jungle, car il faut excéder la langue, se tenir dans sa marge supplémentaire, c'est-à-dire dans son infini sans profondeur. Si j'avais à imaginer un nouveau Robinson, je ne le placerais pas dans une île déserte, mais dans une ville de douze millions d'habitants dont il ne saurait déchiffrer ni la parole ni l'écriture: ce serait là, je crois, la forme moderne du mythe.[156]

One must not forget that one place in which sketches were developed was as the means by which a tourist would remember the places that they visited – during the eighteenth century, the sketch (be it visual or verbal) was a traditional way of recording one's impressions of foreign places during the 'grand tour'. Moreover, one might suggest that one of the places in which the sketch of London originated is in this convention – visitors to London – and often a visitor from the Celtic fringe – frequently sketched the city. Lady Blessington, for instance, was the daughter of an Irish landowner, and Pearce Egan was the son of an Irish road-making labourer. Both of them are technologies that somehow depend on people being out of place, away from home. One of the earliest examples of this kind of sketch was the American writer Washington Irving's travel writing under the name of Geoffrey Crayon – his sketches were immensely popular. *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, which was published serially between 1819 and 1820 (and revised by the author in 1848), is a collection of 34 essays and short stories, several of which are about London ('A Sunday in London,' 'Westminster Abbey', 'Little Britain', 'London Antiques'…). The foreign gaze is thus applied to one's home environment in London sketches, and interestingly, the same sort of phenomenon is visible in panoramas, since along with representations of the cities they were exhibited in, panoramas usually represented battle-scenes and distant exotic places, such as Venice, Elba, Corfu, Constantinople, Calcutta, the Falls of Niagara, the Himalayas, the Mont Blanc…[157] Dickens exposed this phenomenon in *Household Words*, through the character of Mr. Booley,

[156] Roland Barthes, *Le Grain de la voix* (Paris: Seuil, Points Essais, 1981), 131. 'To live in a country one does not know the language of, to live there extensively, beyond touristic quarters, is the most dangerous adventure […]; it is more perilous (for the "self") than to brave the jungle, because one has to exceed language, to stand in its supplementary margin, that is, in its depthless infinite. If I had to imagine a new Robinson Crusoe, I would not place him on a desert island but in a city of twelve million inhabitants, whose language and writing he would not be able to decipher; this, I think, would be the modern form of the myth.' (*The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962-1980*, trans. Linda Coverdale (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 122.)

[157] For a complete list of all the panoramas exhibited in England, see Laurie Garrison, *Panoramas 1787–1900: Texts and Contexts*.

who reflects on 'the extraordinary amount of travel he has […] accomplished […without ever having] laid aside the English dress, nor departed in the slightest degree from English customs'[158]. Similarly, Albert Smith's *flâneur* notes that 'the dioramas, cosmoramas, and panoramas, give [the visitor to London] the ubiquitous power of being in every quarter of the globe at once. China, Cabool, Rome, Cairo, and Waterloo, are all visited within hour-and-twenty hours.'[159] It seems that the techniques of observations of the traveller are integrated into these new technologies and applied to the home environment for self-observing purposes. According to Laurie Lauster, physiologies 'head a powerful self-reflective trend in sketch-production that brings to light not only the affinity between social types and the stereotyping techniques of print, but also the print medium's own lack of originality, its multipliability and commodification.'[160] These characteristics (self-reflectiveness, multipliability, mobility and commodification) are essential to the definition of modernity. Sketches and panoramas are thus technologies which, in trying to apprehend the new metropolis, adopt and reflect urban modernity, but also *produce* it. This modernity partly stems from the fast-moving print culture. Sketches are not only produced because the city is fast-moving and its inhabitants want to make sense of it, the environment of print, to some extent, produces this modern visual culture and promotes the technologization of viewing by constantly issuing new images, advertising these new spectacular shows. Moreover, the experience of the modern city is made up of the day-to-day interactions of what is going on in the street – observing the hustle and bustle of urban life, looking at prints in shop-windows. Going to a panorama becomes a typical urban experience itself, just as looking at a sketch printed in a periodical is. This replication of the city in the seeing, this dynamic and reciprocal experience of representation is an essential part of urban modernity.

Sketches and panoramas were ubiquitous technologies which actively participated in the making of the modern urban experience. The artists who conceived them were themselves constantly moving through the city, and they incorporated mobility into these modes of observation. Conversely, they themselves progressively metamorphosed into the fluid modern material which they were attempting to capture, thus progressively altering people's modes of

[158]Charles Dickens, 'Some Account of an Extraordinary Traveller', *Household Words*, April 20, 1850, vol. 1, 75.
[159] Albert Smith, *The Natural History of the Idler upon Town* (London: D. Bogue, 1848), 103.
[160] Lauster, *Sketches of the Nineteenth Century*, 290.

observing, comprehending and apprehending the city. The technologization of viewing they instilled transformed the way contemporaries perceived their own city. Their immense popularity also points to the fact that, in a context where the relation between the city and its inhabitants was becoming increasingly mediated, the *flâneur* emerged as the most emblematic figure of mediation. In a way, the *flâneur* appropriated these technologies which, through him, became technologies of the body. The next chapter will dwell on the role of the body in the construction of the flâneurial gaze.

Chapter 4. The Body and the Gaze: The Phenomenology of Passage

The view from above as exposed in chapter 2 gives way to a gaze schooled by visual technology and both far and near seeing in chapter 3. The present chapter further grounds the gaze in the body itself and shows how dependent any gaze is on context. Broadly speaking, the chronological outline of my chapters follows the changing perceptions of vision and visuality which took place during this period. As Crary explains, the beginning of the nineteenth century sees 'an uprooting of vision from the stable and fixed relations incarnated in the camera obscura.'[1] In a way, we move from a perspective according to which the subject and his gaze are removed from the world to one where the gaze is seen as being *embodied*. We started with the idea of a gaze as described by the early Wittgenstein, for whom the eye (or I) does not belong to the world: 'Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be found? You will say that this is exactly like the case of the eye and the visual field. But really you do not see the eye. And nothing in the visual field allows you to infer that it is seen by an eye.'[2] As Stéphane Chauvier points out, Wittgenstein sees the subject as 'a purely contemplative consciousness, like an eye impaled on a stake,'[3] which encapsulates the idea of a fixed panoramic gaze. We then move to the idea of a subjective visual experience which is rooted in the body and thus given an unprecedented mobility. To use another image, we might say, following Crary, that at the beginning of the century, vision is 'taken out of the incorporeal relations of the camera obscura and relocated in the human body.'[4] 'Seeing' is thus never 'pure,' it is never a purely optical phenomenon, as the later Wittgenstein recognized. 'Seeing' is always 'seeing something *in different connexions*.'[5] He uses the example of modern painting to illustrate how seeing always implies movement on the part of the beholder: 'Think of a representation of a face from in front and in profile at the same time, as in some modern pictures. A representation in which a movement, an alteration, a roving of

[1] Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture* [1999] (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 14.
[2] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Keagan Paul, 1922), 5.633, 75.
[3] Stéphane Chauvier, *Dire "Je" Essai sur la subjectivité* (Paris: Vrin, 2001), 170. 'Wittgenstein [semble] considérer le sujet comme une conscience purement contemplative, à la manière d'un œil fiché dans un pieu.'
[4] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer. On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA and London: October Books, MIT Press, 1992), 16.
[5] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 2 vols (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1980), vol. 1, 960, p. 169e.

one's glance, are included. Does such a picture not really represent what one sees?'[6] The walking *flâneur*, in a way, is a reflection of the mobility inherent in the act of seeing, and what this image illustrates is that his whole body partakes in the construction of his gaze.

In this chapter, I would like to insist on the corporeality of the *flâneur* and of his gaze, which is first and foremost a gaze embedded in flesh. In a way, I would like to build a fleshy creature around this 'eye impaled on a stake,' and show how the body feeds the *flâneur*'s eye with data but also blurs what the eye thinks it can see. Jean Starobinski has underlined the sensual nature of the gaze:

> Le regard s'en tient difficilement à la pure constatation des apparences. Il est dans sa nature même de réclamer davantage. A la vérité cette impatience habite tous les sens. […] Chaque sens aspire à échanger ses pouvoirs. Goethe l'a dit dans une Elégie célèbre: les mains veulent voir, les yeux souhaitent caresser. A quoi l'on peut ajouter: le regard veut devenir parole, il consent à perdre la faculté de percevoir immédiatement, pour acquérir le don de fixer plus durablement ce qui le fuit.[7]

For Starobinski, the gaze is formed through the interaction of a 'living eye' with the whole body, and it also wants to communicate and pass on what it perceives (not unlike the *flâneur* who captures the essence of the city and transposes it into words). Gazing implies much more than seeing, it is 'not so much the faculty of collecting images as that of establishing a relation.'[8] By putting Wittgenstein's 'eye impaled on a stake' back into the body of the *flâneur*, I hope to demonstrate that his eye is a 'living eye' which communicates with all the other senses. I will focus on the *flâneur*'s perception, using Crary's definition of the term, as 'primarily a way of indicating a subject definable in terms of more than the single-sense modality of sight, in terms also of hearing and touch and, most importantly, of irreducibly *mixed* modalities.'[9] Following Crary and Starobinski, I will argue that the *flâneur*'s gaze is not only constructed through the sense of sight, but through all the senses. Critics have often

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[6] Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. 1, 968, p. 170e.

[7] Jean Starobinski, *L'Œil Vivant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1961), 62. 'It is difficult for the gaze to limit itself to ascertaining appearances. By its very nature it must ask for more. In fact this impatience inhabits all the senses. […] each sense aspires to exchange its powers with the others. In a celebrated Elegy Goethe said: the hands want to see, the eyes want to caress. We may add: the gaze wants to speak. It is willing to give up the faculty of immediate perception in exchange for the gift of fixing more permanently whatever flees its grasp.' (*The Living Eye*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: Harvard University Press, 1989), 3.)

[8] Starobinski, *The Living Eye*, 3.

[9] Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 3.

compared the *flâneur* to a camera eye which records everything and insisted on the predominance of sight over other senses in the cognitive process.[10] If vision does seem to dominate nineteenth-century culture, an approach taking into account all the senses may help us grasp how sight interrelates with the other senses to create the *flâneur*'s gaze. Recent research has shown that many parts of the body are actually involved in the making of a visual experience.[11] I will first 'reconstruct' a body around the eye of the *flâneur* in an attempt to widen this perspective and demonstrate the importance of the body walking across space in the construction of the gaze. Perception is reliant on a moving changing body, not only a camera eye, and I will look at the complexity of the eye / mind / body triad inherent to the activity of passage.[12]

Examining the role of how the different senses interact might prove valuable for several reasons. It is at the core of what has been called the 'sensual turn' in literary studies, which has been defined as 'a habit, a way of thinking about [culture], and a way of becoming attuned to the wealth of sensory evidence embedded in any number of texts.'[13] The 'sensual turn', influenced by physical and psychological research, has reminded us that bodies should be treated as 'bundles of interconnected experiences and properties.'[14] However, sensory perception is not only an immediate apprehension of data by the senses. Senses are also historically and culturally constructed. The division of the senses into five units itself is of course largely culturally dependent. Like ways of seeing, ways of sensing 'generate social and moral meanings about gender, class, health, power, space, time, and beauty that are fleshed out in literature and art.'[15] As Aimé Boutin points out, many nineteenth-century thinkers and writers 'mapped the senses onto social distinctions that linked the lower classes — and

[10] See Anke Gleber, *The Art of taking a Walk* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999).
[11] Cretien van Campen, *The Hidden Sense: Synesthesia in Art and Science*, (Boston: MIT Press, 2007), 100. 'For instance, the eye we see does not itself see, nor does it experience visual impressions. The process of vision includes more body structures, starting with the eyeball, where an inverted image is registered on its inner posterior side; information on the image (not a picture!) is transported through the visual nerves to the visual areas in the brain, where it is processed with the help of memories, expectations, and emotions, and adjusted according to the position of the head and the body, before it becomes something that we can see: a visual experience.'
[12] Some critics have recently worked on this revaluation of the senses with regard to *flânerie*. See Aimée Boutin (ed.), *Special Issue of Dix-Neuf: Journal of the Society of Dix-Neuviémistes*, 16.2 (July 2012). Nancy Forgione, 'Everyday Life in Motion: The Art of Walking in Late-Nineteenth-Century Paris', *The Art Bulletin*, 87, 4 (December 2005), 664-687.
[13] Mark M. Smith, *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling and Tasting, and Touching in History* (Berkeley: University of California Press. 2007), 5.
[14] David Howes, 'Charting the sensorial revolution', *The Senses and Society* (1: 1, March, 2006), 115.
[15] Aimé Boutin, 'Rethinking the *Flâneur*: *Flânerie* and the Senses', in Aimée Boutin (ed.), *Special Issue of Dix-Neuf: Journal of the Society of Dix-Neuviémistes* 16.2 (July 2012), 126.

women — with the baser senses. We might be wary, then, of a discourse on the primacy of vision and the hierarchy of the senses that can reproduce rather than expose class or gender prejudice.'[16] Looking at how the different senses were written about in different contexts and revaluating them might shed a different light on the way we apprehend the *flâneur*. It may widen the scope of what the experience of passage encompasses and thus widen the definition of *flânerie*, which is always updating itself and incorporating new elements.

The idea of passage will be central to this chapter, since it articulates several notions which are at the core of the experience of *flânerie*. The word 'passage' refers first and foremost to 'the action of going or moving onward, across, or past; movement from one place or point to another, or over or through a space or medium.'[17] However, 'passage' may also refer to 'a section of a speech, text, or play.'[18] One may thus see 'passage' as a phenomenological category which the *flâneur*/writer transforms into an aesthetic category. There is a fundamental link between the movement of the body, perceiving, and writing. Movement is part of perception, and is thus an integral part of the construction of the gaze of the *flâneur*. The French language phonetically highlights the interrelations between *voir*, *percevoir*, and *se mouvoir*. Movement and perception are so intertwined that the Dutch physician Albert Soesman, who identified twelve senses in the 1980s, included a sense of self-movement in his classification.[19] Sensing and moving are two inseparable activities, as sensing always starts with a movement towards an object. If we think about the sense of touch, for instance, we quickly realize that it is intimately connected with movement, as Renaud Barbaras points out:

> Comment mes mains pourraient-elles exercer la pression exactement requise pour éprouver telle qualité de surface si leur mouvement n'était pas déjà toucher? Comment d'ailleurs distinguer précisément le toucher du mouvement de ma main? Que serait l'expérience d'une dureté sans pression des doigts, d'une rugosité sans déplacement?[20]

[16] Boutin, 'Rethinking the *Flâneur*', 126.
[17] 'passage, *n*.' OED.
[18] 'passage, *n*.' OED.
[19] Albert Soesman, *The Twelve Senses*, trans. Jakob Cornelis (Stroud: Hawthorn Press Ltd, 1990).
[20] Renaud Barbaras, *La perception. Essai sur le sensible* (Paris: Hatier, 1994). 'How could my hands apply the right pressure to feel the property of surfaces if their movement was not already contained in (the sense of) touch? How can one tell the difference between touch and the movement of the hand? What would hardness feel like if our fingers did not apply pressure, or roughness feel like if our fingers did not move?'

Similarly, if we think about the sense of sight, movement is at the heart of the process of accommodation, which we have established as a crucial tool to think about the *flâneur* in chapter 3. The eye – like the *flâneur* – searches, explores, pauses and accommodates constantly to obtain as clear and unobstructed an image as possible. However, this moving gaze – and the image that results from it – cannot be entirely objective, since the movement of the eye anticipates and prepares vision, as Merleau-Ponty points out: 'La vision est suspendue au mouvement. On ne voit que ce qu'on regarde. Que serait la vision sans aucun mouvement des yeux, et comment leur mouvement ne brouillerait-il pas les choses s'il était lui-même réflexe ou aveugle, s'il n'avait pas ses antennes, sa clairvoyance, si la vision ne se précédait en lui ?'[21] Movement is thus both a lens and a screen which is inseparable from the act of seeing. As can be seen in these two examples, movement is at the core of perception. Von Weizsaecker has underlined this connection between moving and sensing: 'We do not know if sensation guides movement or if movement determines the place of each sensation. Because movement, like a sculptor, creates the object, and sensation receives it as if in ecstasy.'[22] What Von Weizsaecker's comparison with the sculptor shows is that movement creates the object, just as the movement of the *flâneur* (of his gaze, of his body, of his writing) creates the urban space. We need the city to be filtered and re-created through the *flâneur*'s body[23] and conscience – or body as conscience – to be able apprehend it. In this chapter, I would like to explore how the bodily experience of passage through the city shapes textual passages of *flânerie*.

The *flâneur* is not only a passerby but also a *passeur*, someone who gives readers access to the city through his writing. I will thus first focus on how nineteenth-century writers inscribe the body of the *flâneur* into the body of the text. I will attempt to read the movements

[21] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *L'Œil et l'Esprit* [1960] (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 17. 'Vision is attached to movement. We see only what we look at. What would vision be without eye movement? And how could the movement of the eyes not blur things if movement were blind? If it were only a reflex? If it did not have its antennae, its clairvoyance? If vision were not prefigured in it?' ('Eye and mind' in Galen A. Johnson, Michael B. Smith (ed., trans.), *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, ((Evanston, Illinois: Northwester University Press, 1993), 124.)

[22] From Viktor von Weizsäcker, *Le Cycle de la structure*, trans. Michel Foucault, Daniel Rocher (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1958), 195. 'On ne sait pas si c'est la sensation qui guide le mouvement, ou si c'est le mouvement d'abord qui détermine le lieu et le moment de chaque sensation. Car le mouvement, comme un sculpteur, crée l'objet, et la sensation le reçoit comme dans une extase.'

[23] I would like to use Elizabeth Grosz's definition of the body here, which she defines as 'a concrete, material, animate organization of flesh, organs, nerves, muscles, and skeletal structure which are given a unity, cohesiveness, and organization only through their psychical and social inscription as the surface and raw materials of an integrated and cohesive totality.' (Elizabeth Grosz, 'Bodies-Cities', in Heidi Nast and Steve Pile (eds.), *Places through the Body* (London: Routledge Turner, 1998), 32.)

of *flâneurs* in Paris and London literature in conjunction with Merleau Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, which sees the body as the primary site of knowing the world. I will then examine the relations between the *flâneur*'s passing body and the dialectics of attention and distraction which characterizes urban subjects. Indeed, the whole body plays a crucial part in the way we see, perceive and receive the world. Finally, the physical movement of passing through space makes us realize that time is also a bodily experience: the word passage evokes the idea of the passage of time and ultimately, passing away, dying. The idea of passage is thus connected to ontology. In other words, I would like to examine how the notion of passage helps us move from the physicality of perception to an aesthetics which creates a *flâneur* endowed with a corporeal, subjective gaze. We might thus see the *flâneur* as 'a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye,'[24] whose passing body works upon the body of time.

I. A body passes by

In this section, I will lay emphasis on the embodiedness of the *flâneur*'s vision. I would like to envisage the whole of the *flâneur*'s body as a surface on which the city leaves its imprint. The city is a space whose sights, sounds and smells are constantly changing and mutating. The city space can be envisaged as a 'metabolic space,' according to Jean-François Augoyard's definition of the term:

> Dans l'urbaine quotidienneté, souvent encombrée par la compétition physique et sociale entre sources sonores multiples, le rapport entre fond et figure est beaucoup moins stable. Ce qui me paraissait figure entre plus tard dans le fond d'où émergent alors d'autres formes discernables. Ce phénomène est parfaitement décrit par une figure de la rhétorique classique. La métabole désigne ainsi un processus dans lequel les éléments d'un ensemble entrent en rapport de permutations et de combinaisons hiérarchisées sans qu'aucune configuration ne soit durable. Par nature, l'espace sonore ne serait-il pas un espace métabolique?[25]

[24] Virginia Woolf, 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure' [1930], in David Bradshaw, *Virginia Woolf, Selected Essays* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 178.

[25] Jean-François Augoyard, 'La vue est-elle souveraine dans l'esthétique paysagère ?', *Le débat*, 65, 1991. 'In daily urban life, which is often cluttered with multiple, competing sounds, the links between background and

Augoyard's definition of a 'metabolic space', which he applies to the soundscape, could apply to the polymorphous cityscape, which constantly bombards us with changing multisensory data. Interestingly, the word metabola, which comes from the Greek *metabole* ('a change'), in medical terms, also refers to a change or mutation in a diseased body. The moving body of the *flâneur*, which can adapt to this changing space, seems to be in an ideal position to apprehend the metabolic body of the city. The *flâneur*'s whole body is a perceptive surface which allows things in. He makes his way through the sounds, smells, tastes and textures of the city as well as through its sights. The *flâneur* is not only synonymous with the French word *captation* (recording, making a film), he captures the whole experience of moving through the city. His body might be compared to a recording instrument, a seismograph that not only registers all kinds of sensory impressions but also transmits them. I borrow the image of the seismograph from Warburg to highlight the acute sensitivity and precision of the *flâneur*'s perception, as well as to insist on his role as a transmitter, or translator.[26] The *flâneur*'s moving body might thus already be a form of consciousness.

I would like to focus on examples of *flânerie* on both sides of the Channel to illustrate this point. Balzac, in *Physiologie du Mariage*, famously described *flânerie* as a synesthetic experience mixing different sensuous experiences: 'Oh! errer dans Paris! adorable et délicieuse existence! Flâner est une science, c'est la gastronomie de l'œil.'[27] Several critics have recently performed 'sensual rereadings' of Balzac's work.[28] It is well-known that Dickens 'particularly admired Balzac,'[29] and one can find a similar emphasis on the body and the senses in Dickens's flâneurial pieces. However, this might be due to the fact that Dickens

figures is very unstable. What seemed to me to be a figure a moment ago merges into the background, from which other discernible shapes start emerging. This phenomenon is the perfect description of a classical rhetorical figure. The word metabole designates the process through which elements belonging to a whole start moving, combining and recombining, forming new configurations which never last. Isn't the soundscape, by nature, a 'metabolic' space?'

[26] For Warburg, Nietzsche and Burckhardt are 'very sensitive seismographs whose foundations tremble when they must receive and transmit the waves.' (Ernst H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (London: The Warburg Institute and University of London, 1970), 254.)

[27] Honoré de Balzac, *Physiologie du mariage* [1829], in Pierre-Georges Castex (ed.), *La Comédie humaine*, 12 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Collection 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade', 1976-1981), vol. 11 [1980], 930. 'Ah! To wander over Paris! What an adorable and delightful existence is that! To saunter is a science; it is the gastronomy of the eye.' (Katharine Prescott Wormeley (trans.), *The Physiology of Marriage* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 27.)

[28] See Catherine Nesci, 'Re-Readings: Gender, Sensibility, and the Classes of Flânerie', in Aimé Boutin, *Special Issue of Dix-Neuf*, 16.2 (July 2012), 133-148. Ewa Szypula, 'Senses and Sensibility: The Significance of the Love Token in Balzac's Letters to Madame Hanska,' SDN Annual Conference on 'The Senses' Limerick, Ireland, 30 March – 1 April 2012.

[29] Phillip Collins, 'Dickens's Reading', *Dickensian* 60 (1964), 142.

was a compulsive walker himself, and that 'the nineteenth century city offered at that precise moment in history a concentration of sense stimuli perhaps unparalleled before or since in range and variety and intensity.'[30] I will focus on examples taken from Dickens's novels and short stories to demonstrate how all the senses contribute to shaping the *flâneur*'s gaze.

Dickens paid specific attention to the wealth of sensory experience the city produced. Although he never used the word *flâneur*, walking bodies taking in impressions and sensing the world around them are a pervasive presence throughout his work, from the 1836 *Sketches by Boz* to the 1859 *Uncommercial Traveller*. Michael Hollington has shown the importance of the five senses in Dickens's perception of the city in a recent article about the *Uncommercial Traveller*. In 'Poor Mercantile Jack,' for example, the uncommercial traveller accompanies urban detectives who use all their senses to read the city, as their onomastic nicknames clearly show: 'Quickear' and 'Sharpeye' (whose faculty of touch is also exceptional), become the models whom he tries to emulate.[31] In this section, however, I would like to focus on a character who, unlike Boz, Master Humphrey or the uncommercial traveller, has not often been associated with the figure of the *flâneur*. I will examine the comings and goings of Jo, the orphan of Dickens's 1853 *Bleak House*. Jo may be seen as embodying urban perception at its most basic level, or as a character who, in a way, has not reached the status of the fully-fledged *flâneur*. Interestingly, *Bleak House* is precisely a novel concerned with obscured vision and perception, as its brilliant opening reminds us:

> Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of

[30] Michael Hollington, 'Dickens, the City, and the Five Senses', in *AUMLA: Journal of the Australasian Universities Modern Language Association*, v (May 2010), no page number.
[31] Hollington, 'Dickens, the City, and the Five Senses', no page number.

> fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon, and hanging in the misty clouds.[32]

The fog which weighs over London casts the threat of undifferentiation over the city and its inhabitants. This pervasive indistinctness is emphasized by the anaphora of the word 'fog,' which seems to annihilate the distinctions between spaces, elements and people. It even invades bodies and threatens to confound all the senses: it makes its way into the lungs, eyes and throats of Londoners and pinches their toes and fingers. However, it is sight which is presented as the most imperiled of all senses. One might even say that vision is seen as failing from the very outset of the novel. The vision of the supposedly omniscient narrator is uncertain and obfuscated, like that of 'chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog,' and so is that of the other main narrator of the novel, Esther. Upon first entering London, the utter confusion of the senses she experiences overcomes her: 'We drove slowly through the dirtiest and darkest streets that ever were seen in the world (I thought), and in such a distracting state of confusion that I wondered how the people kept their senses.'[33] Be it panoramic or at street-level, vision seems to be troubled, deficient and off-key.

Jo is a homeless boy who lives on the London streets, cannot read nor write, and tries to make a living as a crossing sweeper. One might see Jo as a *flâneur* stripped bare of all his attributes and functions.

> It must be a strange state to be like Jo! To shuffle through the streets, unfamiliar with the shapes, and in utter darkness as to the meaning, of those mysterious symbols, so abundant over the shops, and at the corners of streets, and on the doors, and in the windows! To see people read, and to see people write, and to see the postmen deliver letters, and not to have the least idea of all that language—to be, to every scrap of it, stone blind and dumb! It must be very puzzling to see the good company going to the churches on Sundays, with their books in their hands, and to think (for perhaps Jo DOES think at odd times) what does it all mean, and if it means anything to anybody, how comes it that it means nothing to me? To be hustled, and jostled, and moved on; and really to feel that it would appear to be perfectly true that I have no business here, or there, or anywhere; and yet to be

[32] Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* [1853] (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), chapter 1, 13.
[33] Dickens, *Bleak House*, chapter 3, 42.

> perplexed by the consideration that I AM here somehow, too, and everybody overlooked me until I became the creature that I am! It must be a strange state, not merely to be told that I am scarcely human (as in the case of my offering myself for a witness), but to feel it of my own knowledge all my life! To see the horses, dogs, and cattle go by me and to know that in ignorance I belong to them and not to the superior beings in my shape, whose delicacy I offend![34]

Jo, in this scene, could actually be described as the very opposite of a *flâneur*. He is seen 'shuffling through the streets' and his footsteps have none of the lightness of the *flâneur*'s sauntering or strolling. He either has difficulty dragging himself along the streets or is being 'hustled, and jostled, and moved on.' The ternary rhythm (which is a mark of insistence) and the passive structure used here underline the lack of agency which characterizes Jo's movements, and which is poles apart from the *flâneur*'s absolute freedom of movement. He is described as the uncomprehending object of other people's actions and seems to be weighed down by his own body. He seems to be reduced to a pure matter, to a body which is in the way. For Jo, there is no escaping the body and bodily needs. As Foucault reminds us, the body 'is never elsewhere:' 'Mon corps, c'est le contraire d'une utopie, ce qui n'est jamais sous un autre ciel, il est le lieu absolu, le petit fragment d'espace avec lequel, au sens strict, je fais corps. […] Mon corps, c'est le lieu sans recours auquel je suis condamné.'[35] Jo's poverty and insistent corporality seem to make him the embodiment of abjection, which originally designates 'the state of being cast down' or 'cast off or away,'[36] which precisely corresponds to Jo's condition. But he is also abject in Julia Kristeva's sense, in that he disturbs and is rejected by social reason because he is neither object nor subject, and 'draws [us] towards the place where meaning collapses.'[37] For Kristeva, 'the abject has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to I,'[38] and indeed, what is striking in this passage is precisely Jo's precarious sense of subjectivity. Jo is a pure body, and it seems that his material need largely obstructs thoughts and reasoning. Jo feels and senses the world around him, but does

[34] Dickens, *Bleak House*, chapter 16, 257-8.
[35] Michel Foucault, 'Le Corps utopique', conférence radiophonique prononcée le 7 décembre 1966 sur France-Culture. *Utopies et hétérotopies* (INA-Mémoires vives, 2004). 'The body is here, irreparably: it is never elsewhere. My body, it's the opposite of a utopia: that which is never under different skies. It is the absolute place, the little fragment of space where I am, literally, embodied. […] It is the place without recourse to which I am condemned.' ('Utopian body', trans. Lucia Allais in Caroline A. Jones (ed.), *Sensorium. Embodied Experience, Technology, and Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, MA/London: The MIT Press, 2006), 229.)
[36] 'abjection, *n*.' OED.
[37] Julia Kristeva, *Power of Horror, An Essay in Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 2.
[38] Kristeva, *Power of Horror*, 1.

not seem to be able to comprehend it. The repetition of the verb 'see' is contrasted to phrases expressing opacity of meaning ('utter darkness', 'mysterious', 'puzzling', 'means nothing to me'). Jo's sensations are presented as being cut off from intellection. The text goes as far as to use the words 'stone-blind and dumb' to describe his incomprehension of the world around him, which deprives him of the senses of sight and hearing. However, one might say his confused sensations almost reflect what Merleau-Ponty calls 'preconscious perception,' which is a state of flux where all impressions can be compared to the 'primordial sensory soup' of babies.'[39]

Jo's complex and confused sensations reflect what thinkers discovered about perception at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Goethe, for instance, 'poses the opacity of the observer as a necessary condition for the appearance of phenomena. Perception occurs within the realm of the turbid, cloudy, or gloomy.'[40] Indeed, meaning progressively emerges from this body which is seemingly deprived of understanding and unable to produce narrative. In this passage, there is a shift from third-person narration to first-person narration, and Jo becomes, for one paragraph, the narrator of the novel. Thus, despite his state of abjection, by observing the moving bodies of others (even of animals[41]) and by constantly being moved on, Jo experiences the physicality of his being, and thus gains access to a form of self-perception: 'I have no business here, or there, or anywhere; and yet to be perplexed by the consideration that I am here somehow, too, and everybody overlooked me until I became the creature that I am!' The experience of passage has to do with ontology, and looking at Jo helps us see how important the body is in terms of self-perception. Merleau-Ponty reminds us that the body is a form of consciousness. Jo is all the more interesting to examine since Esther, the part-time narrator and protagonist of the novel, is characterized by her inability to see herself clearly and to connect with her own body, as Rignall perceptively points out: 'Esther's vision, with respect to herself, 'is restricted and her characteristic peeping comes to suggest an inability to look squarely at her own life and person: her narrative is the story of how she overcomes this inability.'[42] The experience of passage, the ability to connect with one's body through walking, is thus a way to experience the (unbearable) weight of being and to reach a form

[39] Campen, *The Hidden Sense*, 32.
[40] Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 72.
[41] The importance of the 'lower' senses is emphasized a few paragraphs on when Jo is compared to 'blinded oxen, over-goaded, over-driven, never-guided' and then listens to a band of music and is deemed to be 'far above the human listener.' (Dickens, *Bleak House*, chapter 16, 258-9).
[42] John Rignall, *Realist Fiction and the Strolling Spectator* (London, New York: Routledge, 1992), 66.

self-perception. However, it remains partial because of Jo's material poverty and constant situation of privation. The point of consciousness is grasped after but never fully achieved. This seems to hint at the fact that a poor man, a man in need, can never quite be a *flâneur*.

I would now like to compare Jo's experience of passage to Dickens's own experience of *flânerie*. In his 1861 essay 'Night Walks', both the city and the self seem to emerge from obscurity and opacity of meaning through the activity of the protagonist's walking body. The protagonist explains his nocturnal wandering habit from his inability to sleep. The reciprocity between the restlessness of the *flâneur*'s body and that of the city is made evident from the start of the tale: 'The restlessness of a great city, and the way in which it tumbles and tosses before it can get to sleep, formed one of the first entertainments offered to the contemplation of us houseless people.'[43] The *flâneur* seems to project his own restlessness onto the canvas of the city. The *flâneur*'s mindscape and the cityscape become inseparable: 'But, it was always the case that London, as if in imitation of individual citizens belonging to it, had expiring fits and starts of restlessness.'[44] This collective agitation fades, the 'flickering sparks die away, worn out', London 'sinks to rest', but the walker remains restless. His extraordinary description of 'houselessness', which refers both to his state of mind and actual vagabondage, is experienced as a bodily experience which involves all the senses:

> Houselessness would walk and walk and walk, seeing nothing but the interminable tangle of streets, save at a corner. […] Under a kind of fascination, and in a ghostly silence suitable to the time, Houselessness and this gentleman would eye one another from head to foot, and so, without exchange of speech, part, mutually suspicious. Drip, drip, drip, from ledge and coping, splash from pipes and water-spouts, and by-and-by the houseless shadow would fall upon the stones that pave the way to Waterloo-bridge.[45]

It seems that here, the 'process of walking, with its phenomenologically coherent intertwining of body, mind, and vision, can stimulate what Husserl would describe as a sense of the continuity of the self amid the flux of the world, and can thereby help define their relation to

[43] Dickens, 'Night Walks', in *The Uncommercial Traveller and Reprinted Pieces* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 127.
[44] Dickens, 'Night Walks', 127.
[45] Dickens, 'Night Walks', 128.

each other.'[46] The activity of walking favours the processes of discovery of both the city and the self. The steady rhythm of the repetition of the word 'walk' underlines the regularity of the pace of the walking body, which unites the cityscape and the mindscape of the protagonist harmoniously. His nocturnal voyage of discovery is an intensely physical experience, made more intense by the obscurity of night, which shows him the city in a different light. His dimmed vision means he only catches passing glimpses of shadowy figures, and must use his other senses to make out the city. The onomatopoeic 'drip drip drip' is a vivid evocation of one of its familiar sounds. Later on, the narrator 'gropes his way' through the city and touches 'the rough stone' of Newgate, while evocations of meals open and close his tour of the city with 'some late pieman or hot-potato man's' embers being 'the last veritable sparks of waking life' and 'the first street-corner breakfast-sellers' rekindling the fires of the city. The narrator's intensely physical experience of vagrancy leads him to identify with houselessness body and soul, as 'houselessness' and 'I' become interchangeable terms in the text. He becomes a houseless wanderer, which takes him on a voyage of self-discovery through the night. Hollington points out that 'the regular monotony of walking seems often to have inspired in [Dickens] a kind of hypnotic state in which the unconscious mind is at least as active as the conscious.'[47] In this hypnotic state, the city around the narrator and his mindscape merge into one. Walking past Bethlehem Hospital, for instance, leads him to make this analogy: 'Are not the sane and the insane equal at night as the sane lie a dreaming? Are not all of us outside this hospital, who dream, more or less in the condition of those inside it, every night of our lives?'[48] As he walks through the city, the narrator seems to be sinking into layers of dreams, reveries and memories.[49] Bergson points out that 'there is no perception which is not full of memories. With the immediate and present data of our senses, we mingle a thousand details out of past experience.'[50] Dickens's sensorial *flâneries* through the city lead him on an inward journey towards reverie. Interestingly, for Bachelard, reverie is polysensorial and leads to 'a renewal of the joy of perceiving, a subtlety of all senses, a

[46] Nancy Forgione, 'Everyday Life in Motion: The Art of Walking in Late-Nineteenth-Century Paris', *The Art Bulletin*, 87, 4 (Dec., 2005), 664.
[47] Hollington, 'Dickens, the City, and the Five Senses.'
[48] Dickens, 'Night Walks', 131.
[49] Benjamin suggests that in order to understand the city, the narrator 'sink[s the city] into the deepest stratum of the dream.' (AP [F°, 34], 249.)
[50] Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* [1896], trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1911), 24.

subtlety which bears the privilege of a perception from one sense to another.'[51] *Flânerie* leads the walker towards reverie, which, in turn, leads him back to his bodily senses. The sensory experience of vagrancy thus takes the narrator on a voyage of self-discovery, which reveals that perception is an intersubjective and ongoing process of exploration, discovery, and self-discovery.

What is interesting in these two Dickens extracts is the marked difference between Jo's condition of utter poverty, lack of belonging and homelessness and Dickens's empathetic yet temporary condition of houselessness. Social consciousness is very marked in Dickens, and he takes great care in distinguishing between Jo's lack of choice and the *flâneur*'s freedom to embrace 'houselessness,' and the 'utopia of an incorporeal body.'[52] In 'Night walks', the *flâneur* is free from bodily need and can thus become a figure of desire. He has the freedom to identify with 'houselessness,' to become bodiless, project his sense of self onto the city and thereby, to become somebody. By contrast, Jo's bodily needs are not satisfied, he is not 'bodiness' but only body, and for that reason, he does not quite manage to become somebody. He remains a marginalized 'nobody,' an abject body suspended between subject and object or between self and other. This marks a point of difference between Baudelaire's abject *flâneurs*, whose poverty is acquired, and Jo's, who never really had a chance.

What these examples show is that writers not only explore different versions of the *flâneur*, but they are all working with the same proposition that the *flâneur* is an experience of embodiment. *Flânerie* is an experience of all the senses, and the body's interactions with the world play a crucial role in constituting mental states and activities. To a great extent, the *flâneur*'s specific gaze is constructed by the activity and movement of the body. Bodies are scribes writing the 'thicks and thins of the urban "text."'[53] The rhythms, movements and shocks of the metabolic city are absorbed by the seismographic body of the *flâneur*. His moving, gazing body absorbs and registers the seismic waves generated by the city and puts them down on paper. Flâneurial writing is thus a translation of the bodily experience of passage which allows readers to apprehend the metabolic city.

[51] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie. Childhood, Language, and the Cosmos*, trans. Daniel Russell (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 162.
[52] Foucault, 'Utopian body', 229.
[53] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life 1*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 93.

II. Attention and distraction or the dialectics of passage

Crary notes that the act of perception becomes as much the subject of representation as the object itself in the nineteenth century, which emphasizes the subjectivity of vision. The *flâneur* is the literary embodiment of this phenomenon – we experience the city through his subjective gaze, which is the product of this intertwining of body, mind and vision. I shall now examine the effects this very subjective form of passage has on the *flâneur*'s modes of apprehending the city. The very sensory experience of passage through the city also creates a particular form of perception, which has to do with the dialectics of attention and distraction discussed by Crary in his influential book, *Suspensions of Perception*. According to him, attention, our capacity to concentrate intently on anything, is historically constructed. For him, since the nineteenth century, Western modernity 'has demanded that individuals define and shape themselves in terms of a capacity for "paying attention," that is, for a disengagement from a broader field of attraction, whether visual or auditory, for the sake of isolating or focusing on a reduced number of stimuli.'[54] Crary links the new regime of attention to control and surveillance: 'what is important to institutional power, since the late nineteenth century, is simply that perception functions in a way that insures a subject is productive, manageable, and predictable, and is able to be socially integrated and adaptive.'[55] On the other hand, 'the realization that attention had limits beyond and below which productivity and social cohesion were threatened created a volative indistinction between newly designated "pathologies" of attention and creative, intensive states of deep absorption and daydreaming.'[56] Thus, 'distraction can only be understood through its reciprocal relation to the rise of attentive norms and practices.'[57]

I would like to use Crary's work as a starting point here to explore how *flânerie* works in relation to this dialectical regime of attention and distraction. I will start by studying texts

[54] Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 1.
[55] Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 4.
[56] Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 4.
[57] Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 1.

representing how this new regime of attention is implemented in the city and how it shapes the experience of passage for both the passers-by and the readers. However, these texts clearly point to the fact that a sustained regime of attention is untenable, and many of them show that intense focus, absolute attention, does not yield all the answers, and seem to suggest that a mode of distracted seeing, or more largely, of distracted perception, might be more a more appropriate way to apprehend the city. The body of the *flâneur* is a surface which lets things in and registers different sensual phenomena. The experience of passage is a holistic one, and it is perhaps precisely when one is not paying attention that one discovers most about the city and the self – that one becomes a true *flâneur*. Distracted *flânerie* produces a specific form of writing, which I would like to compare to what Ross Chambers has aptly named *loiterature*, which 'distracts attention from what it's up to.'[58]

I will first look at how texts represented the way the new city became reconfigured as a space designed to draw the passer-by's attention. Many highlight the links between economic imperatives and a sustained regime of visual attention. The birth of this new regime of attention, according to Crary, was very much linked to capitalism, and demanded that individuals focus on a narrow range of stimuli. This is particularly striking where the sense of sight is concerned, as can be seen in the opening of Balzac's 1844 short-story *Gaudissart II*:

> Savoir vendre, pouvoir vendre, et vendre! Le public ne se doute pas de tout ce que Paris doit de grandeurs à ces trois faces du même problème. L'éclat de magasins aussi riches que les salons de la noblesse avant 1789, la splendeur des cafés qui souvent efface, et très-facilement, celle du néo-Versailles, le poème des étalages détruit tous les soirs, reconstruit tous les matins; l'élégance et la grâce des jeunes gens en communication avec les acheteuses, les piquantes physionomies et les toilettes des jeunes filles qui doivent attirer les acheteurs; et enfin, récemment, les profondeurs, les espaces immenses et le luxe babylonien des galeries où les marchands monopolisent les spécialités en les réunissant, tout ceci n'est rien!… Il ne s'agit encore que de plaire à l'organe le plus avide et le plus blasé qui se soit développé chez l'homme depuis la société romaine, et dont l'exigence est devenue sans bornes, grâce aux efforts de la civilisation la plus raffinée. Cet organe, c'est l'œil des Parisiens !… Cet œil consomme des feux d'artifice de cent mille francs,

[58] Ross Chambers, *Loiterature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 9.

> des palais de deux kilomètres de longueur sur soixante pieds de hauteur en verres multicolores, des féeries à quatorze théâtres tous les soirs, des panoramas renaissants, de continuelles expositions de chefs-d'œuvre, des mondes de douleurs et des univers de joie en promenade sur les Boulevards ou errant par les rues; des encyclopédies de guenilles au carnaval, vingt ouvrages illustrés par an, mille caricatures, dix mille vignettes, lithographies et gravures. Cet œil lampe pour quinze mille francs de gaz tous les soirs; enfin, pour le satisfaire, la Ville de Paris dépense annuellement quelques millions en points de vues et en plantations.[59]

The short story opens with a sentence which emphatically declares that it is all about selling. The ternary rhythm created by the repetition of the word *vendre* immediately catches the reader's attention and in a way, sounds like a slogan advertising the idea of a short story about selling to the reader. Moreover, this short sentence phonetically associates the verb *voir* (to see), with the word *vendre* (to sell). Shop windows are competing for the attention of passers-by, using numerous objects and techniques to catch their eye. What is striking in this description is the way the city seems to sparkle before our eyes: shop windows and galleries are 'brilliant', rich', 'luxur[ious]', full of 'splendors'. They even 'eclipse Versailles', which suggests they outshine the Sun King's palace and its famed Hall of Mirrors. Balzac's description seems to open a shimmering dream world before the reader's eyes, the allure of which is irresistible. The reader is invited to walk into the footsteps of the *flâneur* as he penetrates deeper and deeper into this world of phantasmagoria and walks into the 'length, the

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[59] Honoré de Balzac, 'Gaudissart II' in Pierre-Georges Castex (ed.), *La Comédie humaine*, 12 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Collection 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade', 1976-1981), vol. 7 [1977], 847-8.
'To know how to sell, to be able to sell, and to sell. People generally do not suspect how much of the stateliness of Paris is due to these three aspects of the same problem. The brilliant display of shops as rich as the salons of the noblesse before 1789; the splendors of cafes which eclipse, and easily eclipse, the Versailles of our day; the shop-window illusions, new every morning, nightly destroyed; the grace and elegance of the young men that come in contact with fair customers; the piquant faces and costumes of young damsels, who cannot fail to attract the masculine customer; and (and this especially of late) the length, the vast spaces, the Babylonish luxury of galleries where shopkeepers acquire a monopoly of the trade in various articles by bringing them all together,—all this is as nothing. Everything, so far, has been done to appeal to a single sense, and that the most exacting and jaded human faculty, a faculty developed ever since the days of the Roman Empire, until, in our own times, thanks to the efforts of the most fastidious civilization the world has yet seen, its demands are grown limitless. That faculty resides in the "eyes of Paris."
Those eyes require illuminations costing a hundred thousand francs, and many-colored glass palaces a couple of miles long and sixty feet high; they must have a fairyland at some fourteen theatres every night, and a succession of panoramas and exhibitions of the triumphs of art; for them a whole world of suffering and pain, and a universe of joy, must resolve through the boulevards or stray through the streets of Paris; for them encyclopaedias of carnival frippery and a score of illustrated books are brought out every year, to say nothing of caricatures by the hundred, and vignettes, lithographs, and prints by the thousand. To please those eyes, fifteen thousand francs' worth of gas must blaze every night; and, to conclude, for their delectation the great city yearly spends several millions of francs in opening up views and planting trees.' (trans. Clara Bell, 'Gaudissart II', <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1475/1475-h/1475-h.htm> [accessed 20/06/2013]).

vast spaces, the Babylonish luxuries of' *passages* with him. The impression we get is one of visual overload, which goes hand in hand with a feeling of unreality. 'The shop-windows illusions, new every morning, nightly destroyed', in a way, take over from the nocturnal dream and prolong it by bringing it into the daylight of urban life. However, to hold the public's attention, these scenes must be constantly changing and transient: the city displays 'a succession of panoramas and exhibitions' and publications which are 'consumed' and forgotten at a frantic pace for the Parisian public: 'for them encyclopaedias of carnival frippery and a score of illustrated books are brought out every year, to say nothing of caricatures by the hundred, and vignettes, lithographs, and prints by the thousand.' This extract shows us that the strategies which are developed to hold the public's attention are informed by the threat of distraction which goes hand in hand with this new regime of attention. As Crary points out, 'part of the cultural logic of capitalism demands that we accept as *natural* switching our attention rapidly from one thing to another.'[60] Indeed, the heart of the passage focuses precisely on this very idea: 'Il ne s'agit encore que de plaire à l'organe le plus avide et le plus blasé qui se soit développé chez l'homme. […] Cet organe, c'est l'œil des Parisiens!' The eye, this bodily organ, has, 'since the days of the Roman Empire, until, in our own times,' become blasé. All these strategies to hold the gazers' attention are deployed to counter distraction, which is inherent to urban vision. This passage seems to confirm Crary's idea according to which technologies and techniques shaping new modes of attention tend to isolate the senses to create docile bodies that could be captured, shaped or controlled and to ward off the threat of distraction. Thus, distraction – or the threat of distraction – is part and parcel of this new regime of attention.

Thus far, we have established that vision in the nineteenth century was seen as a corporeal, embodied gaze, which meant it could be considered as highly subjective, but which also made it susceptible to be manipulated and controlled by external agencies.[61] Isolating the sense of sight from the other senses was one of the ways in which one could focus subjects' attention and thus control or instrumentalize them. The sense of sight being seen as one of the

[60] Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 30.
[61] See Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 5. 'Attention was an inevitable ingredient of a subjective conception of vision: attention is the means by which an individual observer can transcend those subjective limitations and make perception its own, and attention is at the same time a means by which a perceiver becomes open to control and annexation by external agencies.'

most crucial elements of the *flâneur*'s perception, one might wonder how flâneurial texts addressed this underlying threat of visual control from the outside. I would like to suggest that the profoundly subjective nature of *flâneur*'s gaze stemmed from the way the experience of passage was depicted as an experience of all their senses. Balzac's text, despite showcasing how powerfully visual attention could be grasped and controlled by external agencies, simultaneously suggests that attention contained the seeds of distraction in its very make up. Moreover, depictions of many *flâneurs* seem to suggest that rigorous attention does not give all the answers – quite the opposite. Many texts hint at the fact that circulating through the city and not paying attention to what one should might be what *flânerie* actually entails.

For *flânerie* to be effective, it seems that total visual attention, absolute focus, cannot yield perfect results. This is actually reflected in the physiology of the eye itself. At the very centre of the eye, which corresponds to the place where the optic nerve connects to the eye, is a *punctum caecum*, 'a spot on the retina which is insensible to light.'[62] This blind spot is usually not perceived by subjects because the brain corrects their vision by filling in this gap with information perceived through the other eye. Thus, at the heart of rapt visual attention, lies a blind spot, a blank. To be able to grasp the city, the *flâneur* must use his peripheral vision, or, to use an anachronism, look at the city in soft focus. As Jacqueline Rose points out, 'you can only start seeing—this was Freud's most basic insight— when you know that your vision is troubled, fallible, off-key. The only viable way of reading is not to find, but to disorient, oneself.'[63] Benjamin seems to hint at this mode of seeing in *One-Way-Street* when he evokes 'a gaze that appears to see not a third of what it takes in.'[64] This sentence evokes the idea of a gaze which is saturated or overflowing with sensory impressions. This gaze is thus constructed not only through sight, and may even be distracted from watching – or paying attention – by his other senses. What Benjamin suggests, then, is that to make out the city correctly, the *flâneur* does not use his peripheral vision so much as use what is peripheral to vision, that is, his other senses.

I will examine how this 'sensory gaze' is depicted in nineteenth-century texts. To do so, I will analyse a passage from Dickens's *Great Expectations*, and another short extract

[62] 'blind spot *n*.: (a) the spot on the retina which is insensible to light.' OED.
[63] Jacqueline Rose, *States of Fantasy* [1996] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 144.
[64] Walter Benjamin, *One-Way-Street* in Peter Demetz (ed.), *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings by Walter Benjamin* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 4.

from Charlotte Brontë's 1853 novel *Villette*. Chapter 21 of *Great Expectations* describes Pip's arrival in his lodgings in Barnard's Inn:

> We entered this haven through a wicket-gate, and were disgorged by an introductory passage into a melancholy little square that looked to me like a flat burying-ground. I thought it had the most dismal trees in it, and the most dismal sparrows, and the most dismal cats, and the most dismal houses (in number half a dozen or so), that I had ever seen. I thought the windows of the sets of chambers into which those houses were divided, were in every stage of dilapidated blind and curtain, crippled flower-pot, cracked glass, dusty decay, and miserable makeshift; while To Let To Let To Let, glared at me from empty rooms, as if no new wretches ever came there, and the vengeance of the soul of Barnard were being slowly appeased by the gradual suicide of the present occupants and their unholy interment under the gravel. A frowzy mourning of soot and smoke attired this forlorn creation of Barnard, and it had strewn ashes on its head, and was undergoing penance and humiliation as a mere dust-hole. Thus far my sense of sight; while dry rot and wet rot and all the silent rots that rot in neglected roof and cellar - rot of rat and mouse and bug and coaching-stables near at hand besides - addressed themselves faintly to my sense of smell, and moaned, "Try Barnard's Mixture." [… Mr. Wemmick] led me into a corner and conducted me up a flight of stairs – which appeared to me to be slowly collapsing into sawdust.[65]

Pip divides his description into two distinct parts, starting with the visual aspect of things ('thus far my sense of sight'), and then moving on to his other 'lower' senses. However, this division is ineffective, and the sensations perceived by his 'lower' senses are woven into the canvas of his visual description of the Inn. His haptic gaze seems to feel the dust and cracks on the surface of objects, while the words 'frowzy', 'soot' and 'smoke' conjure up pungent smells. The bodily is everywhere present. As Julia Kristeva points out, the slits in the body let in sensations which can elicit powerful reactions: 'when the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of milk,'[66] for instance, the body cannot but react. London itself is represented as a giant body vomiting Pip out of its belly, and Barnard's Inn is personified and likened to a mourning body clad in soot and smoke. As indicated by the repetition of the words 'to let', visual signs 'glare' insistently at Pip, but they fail to hold his attention for long,

[65] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* [1860-61], ed. Edgar Rosenberg (London: Norton, 1999), ch.21, 137.
[66] Kristeva, *Power of Horror*, 3.

soon being overshadowed by the welter of sensory impressions that follow. The word 'rot', through its repetition, contaminates the text, as it does Barnard's Inn: the smell and texture of rot seem to pervade the place. Moreover, the alliteration of the letter [r] renders the reading out of this long sentence extremely sensory. One must not forget that Dickens's texts were very often being read out, either publically or privately. 'Try Barnard's Mixture' also refers to the sense of taste, since it is 'almost certainly a spoof on the slogan "Try …'s Mixture", with which tobacco merchants or patent-medicine sellers promoted their cheap blends.'[67] This passage shows us a gaze constructed not only through the sense of sight, but through all the sensory impressions with which the city bombards the body. Pure visual attention is shown to be illusory, the *flâneur* being constantly distracted from it by and through the body.

Similarly, in chapter 6 of *Villette*, Charlotte Brontë describes her heroine's first encounter with the city of London. The chapter opens onto an image of a room with a view, as Lucy Snowe is seen opening her curtain to gaze at London from her window: 'I awoke, rose, and opened my curtain, I saw the risen sun struggling through fog. Above my head, above the house-tops, co-elevate almost with the clouds, I saw a solemn, orbed mass, dark blue and dim—THE DOME.'[68] The chapter thus raises the curtain on a purely visual scene, on a tableau representing a comprehensive view of London. This morning vision is reminiscent of Wordsworth's 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802' and of neoclassical paintings of the city. The Dome is a synecdoche which conjures up multiple images of an eternal, calm and idealized London. A scopic sense of power, a sense that the city can be embraced by the eye, dominates these opening lines. Lucy, at this point, is still on the edge of the city space, she is not taken in, not jostled by the crowd. She has not been moving through the city, and therefore has not yet been moved by the city. However, as she rightly anticipates, her sensual experience of the city will be a crucial turning point: 'I, who never yet truly lived, were at last about to taste life. […] "I like the spirit of this great London which I feel around me. Who but a coward would pass his whole life in hamlets; and for ever abandon his faculties to the eating rust of obscurity?"'[69] The sense of taste and touch already permeates her foreseeable London experience. Her experience of passage through London is perceived as a true epiphany, a showing forth – a moment of revelation and self-revelation:

[67] Dickens, *Great Expectations*, footnote, p. 137.
[68] Charlotte Brontë, *Villette* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1853], 2000), 48.
[69] Brontë, *Villette*, 48.

> Elation and pleasure were in my heart: to walk alone in London seemed of itself an adventure. […] Prodigious was the amount of life I lived that morning. Finding myself before St. Paul's, I went in; I mounted to the dome: I saw thence London, with its river, and its bridges, and its churches; […]
>
> Descending, I went wandering whither chance might lead, in a still ecstasy of freedom and enjoyment; and I got—I know not how—I got into the heart of city life. I saw and felt London at last: I got into the Strand; I went up Cornhill; I mixed with the life passing along; I dared the perils of crossings. To do this, and to do it utterly alone, gave me, perhaps an irrational, but a real pleasure. […] The city seems so much more in earnest: its business, its rush, its roar, are such serious things, sights, and sounds. The city is getting its living—the West End but enjoying its pleasure. At the West End you may be amused, but in the city you are deeply excited.
>
> Faint, at last, and hungry (it was years since I had felt such healthy hunger), I returned, about two o'clock, to my dark, old, and quiet inn.[70]

This paragraph describes the very quintessence of *flânerie*, as Lucy takes 'real pleasure' in wandering 'utterly alone' and 'mixing with 'the life passing.' She first wants to experience the idealized sight of London physically by mounting the dome of Saint Paul's, which goes to prove that the *flâneur*'s gaze is one which is constructed by the movements of the whole body. Following this, as she descends into the street, her very physical encounter with the city is literally experienced as a sensual plunge into life, from which she returns 'faint and hungry.' She takes intense pleasure in letting herself be led astray by the city streets. Walking is described as a very sensual experience. The synecdoche of the heart conjures up the image of London as a body. Lucy is being embraced or engulfed by the body of London she 'sees and feels at last.' The enumeration of the city's 'business, its rush, its roar, [… its] sights and sounds' highlights the deeply sensual nature of her movement through the city, which is not only an encounter with the body of the city, but also with other bodies which she mixes with. Moving through the city is experienced as a collision with life which moves her deeply. This passage could also be described as *loiterature*, which Chambers relates to the trivial, in the sense of both 'being insignificant' and 'involving the body.'[71] Indeed, not only is Lucy found

[70] Brontë, *Villette*, 48.
[71] Chambers, *Loiterature*, 7-8. I shall come back to this definition of *loiterature* and the trivial in more detail in the following chapter.

loitering in the city without a significant purpose, but the nature of her loitering is more sensual than intellectual. Here, for the first time in her life, Lucy strays from the straight and narrow path. She lets herself be led astray by her sensory impression, and her epiphany is all the more intense as it is trivial – because it involves her body. This sense of being-in-the-world, in Heidegger's sense, gives her the occasion to explore her sense of subjectivity for the first time in the novel. To paint the full picture of the city, to take it in genuinely, the *flâneur* – or in this case, the *flâneuse* – must thus experience it with his or her whole body. This passage resonates with Woolf's very sensual description of *flânerie* in 'Street haunting':

> Let us dally a little longer, be content still with surfaces only—the glossy brilliance of the motor omnibuses; the carnal splendor of the butchers' shops with their yellow flanks and purple steaks; the blue and red bunches of flowers burning so bravely through the plate glass of the florists' windows.[72]

Here, the *flâneuse* relishes the colours which are offered to her eyes, but her haptic gaze also makes us feel the texture of the omnibuses and the meat, the smooth surface of the window, the smell of the flowers. Just as in Lucy's case, it is during these moments of 'dalliance' that the *flâneuse* escapes the confines of fixed identity and explores her subjectivity:

> But when the door shuts on us, all that vanishes. The shell–like covering which our souls have excreted to house themselves, to make for themselves a shape distinct from others, is broken, and there is left of all these wrinkles and roughnesses a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye.[73]

Here, the movement of the body ('the eye') through the city enables the *flâneuse* to come to subjectivity and become an 'I.'

This sensual understanding of the construction of the *flâneur*'s gaze seems to be confirmed by Walter Benjamin. In *One-Way-Street*, a few pages after evoking this 'gaze that appears to see not a third of what it takes in,' Benjamin gives us the following description of the experience of *flânerie*:

> Not to find one's way in a city may well be uninteresting and banal. It requires ignorance – nothing more. But to lose oneself in a city – as one loses oneself in a forest – that calls for quite a different schooling. Then, sign-boards and street names, passers-by, roofs, kiosks, or bars must speak to the wanderer like a

[72] Woolf, 'Street haunting', 179.
[73] Woolf, 'Street haunting', 178.

> cracking twig under his feet in the forest, like the startling call of a bittern in the distance, like the sudden stillness of a clearing with a lily standing erect at its centre. Paris taught me this art of straying… The city, as it disclosed itself to me… was a maze not only of paths but of tunnels. I cannot think of the underworld of the Metro and the North-South line opening their hundreds of shafts all over the city, without recalling my endless *flâneries*.[74]

To experience the city means to lose one's visual bearings. The *flâneur*'s 'schooling' is subversive, since to become a true *flâneur*, one must unlearn one's sense of direction. Only then will the real nature of the city be revealed to one. The panoptic, controlling gaze is rendered powerless. From the moment one can lose oneself in the city, walking its streets becomes an intensely sensual experience which is akin to that of walking through nature. It is through this sensual experience of walking through the city that the *flâneur* can uncover its essence. The images of the cracking twig, the call of a bittern and the sudden stillness of a clearing combine the senses of sight, touch and hearing, reminding us of the importance of these senses in the physical apprehension of the cityscape and landscape. Benjamin's extract is strikingly reminiscent of descriptions of the experience of passage by the Romantic peripatetic poets. Wordsworth, Coleridge and John Clare all laid an emphasis on the physicality of walking, the primacy of perception and their link with the apprehension of the self. As Eric Leed has explained, the body and mind of the walker work together:

> The mental effects of passage – the development of observational skills, the concentration on forms and relations, the sense of distance between an observing self and a world of objects perceived first in their materiality, their externalities and surfaces, the subjectivity of the observer – are inseparable from the physical conditions of movement through space. These are the features of the human character crafted and shaped by mobility.[75]

The peripatetic's body and mind cannot be separated from the scene. Benjamin's description of *flânerie* highlights this interconnectedness between mindscape and cityscape. Perception as described by Benjamin here is a form of suspension in Crary's sense: it is both 'a looking or listening so rapt that it is an exemption from ordinary conditions […] and a cancellation or an interruption, […] even a negation of perception itself. Perception can be both an absorption

[74] Benjamin, *One-Way-Street*, 8-9.
[75] Eric J. Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler, from Gilgamesh to Global Tourism* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 72.

and an absence or deferral.'[76] The experience of walking the streets and tunnels of Paris liberates the mind and creates hundreds of possible connections with his own memories. Benjamin, like the Romantic wanderer, walks in what Robin Jarvis has called a 'hypnotically self-absorbed state.'[77] He is absorbed in the spectacle of the moment, the impressions created through sensual experience, and the paths that lead him forward. Distraction is something which might have to do with uncoordinated senses. This form of distraction by and through the senses is a form of wandering which leads the *flâneur* to make fortuitous discoveries and unexpected connections with past experiences. Once again, the experience of *flânerie* produces passages of *loiterature*, which Chambers defines as 'sites of endless intersection, [… in which the narrator's attention is …] divided between one thing and some other thing, always ready and willing to be distracted. But that's how they give pleasure.'[78]

Being a *flâneur* means being open to negative capability, being 'capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.'[79] This is confirmed by Woolf for whom the distracted *flâneur*'s eye 'is not a miner, not a diver, not a seeker after buried treasure. It floats us smoothly down a stream; resting, pausing, the brain sleeps perhaps as it looks.'[80] Distracted *flânerie* creates a space for reverie which blurs the limits between the self and the outside world – in this case, the city – as Bachelard explains:

> L'être du rêveur est un être diffus. Mais en revanche, cet être diffus est l'être d'une diffusion. Il échappe à la ponctualisation du hic et du nunc. L'être du rêveur envahit ce qui le touche, diffuse dans le monde. Grâce aux ombres, la région intermédiaire qui sépare l'homme et le monde est une région pleine, et d'une plénitude à la densité légère. Cette région intermédiaire amortit la dialectique de l'être et du non-être. Habitant vraiment tout le volume de son espace, l'homme de la rêverie est de toute part dans son monde, dans un dedans qui n'a pas de dehors. Ce n'est pas pour rien qu'on dit communément que le rêveur est plongé dans sa rêverie. Le monde ne lui fait plus vis-à-vis. Le moi ne s'oppose plus au monde. Dans la rêverie, il n'y a plus de non-moi. Dans la rêverie, le non n'a plus de

[76] Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 10.
[77] Robin Jarvis, *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), 68.
[78] Chambers, *Loiterature*, 9.
[79] John Keats, *The Complete Poetical Works and Letters of John Keats* (Houghton: Mifflin and Company, 1899), 277.
[80] Woolf, 'Street Haunting', 178.

> fonction: tout est accueil. L'espace où est plongé le rêveur est un 'médiateur plastique' entre l'homme et l'univers.[81]

In the 'intermediary region' created by this distracted mode of being, the frontiers between the self and the city are abolished, and the *flâneur* can make discoveries about his own self, or, in Bachelard's words, grasp 'differences in the tonality of being.'[82] Thus, not paying attention to the 'signs-boards and street-names,' letting them unveil meanings beyond their first immediate meaning – which aims at putting us on the right track – is precisely what leads the *flâneur* astray and produces the forms of experience and meaning he seeks. As an example of distraction and a form of 'going astray,' I would like to quote from Chesterton's analysis of Dickens's writing, which epitomizes for Benjamin the essence of the *flâneur*'s psychology. It encapsulates the workings of distraction admirably well:

> Whenever he had done drudging, he had no other resource but drifting, and he drifted over half London. He was a dreamy child. […] He did not go in for 'observation,' a priggish habit; he did not look at Charing Cross to improve his mind or count the lamp-posts in Holborn to practise his arithmetic. But unconsciously he made all these places the scenes of the monstrous drama in his miserable little soul. He walked in darkness under the lamps of Holborn, and was crucified at Charing Cross. […]
>
> The only way to remember a place for ever is to live in the place for an hour; and the only way to live in the place for an hour is to forget the place for an hour. The undying scenes we can all see, if we shut our eyes, are not the scenes we have stared at under the direction of guide-books; the scenes we see are the scenes at which we did not look at all – the scenes in which we walked when we were thinking about something else – about a sin, or a love affair, or some childish sorrow. We can see the background now because we did not see it then. So

[81] Gaston Bachelard, *Poétique de la rêverie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960), 144. The dreamer's being is a diffuse being. But on the other hand, this diffuse being is the being of a diffusion. It escapes the punctualization of the hic and of the nunc. The dreamer's being invades what it touches, diffuses into the world. Thanks to shadows, the intermediary region which separates man from the world is a full region, of a light density fullness. This intermediary region deadens the dialectic between being and non-being.
Truly inhabiting the whole volume of his space, the man of reverie is from anywhere in his world, in an inside which has no outside. It is not without reason that people commonly say that the dreamer is plunged in his reverie. The world no longer poses any opposition to him. The I no longer opposes itself to the world. In reverie there is no more non-I. In reverie, the *no* no longer has any function: everything is welcome. (*The Poetics of Reverie*, trans. Daniel Russell, 167.)

[82] Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie*, 167.

> Dickens did not stamp these places on his mind; he stamped his mind on these places (AP [M11, 2, 3], 438).

The first part of the extract describes Dickens's childhood walks, which were already steeped in distracted *reveries*. Different forms of attention – be it simple 'observation,' the idea of improving his mind, or counting to improve his arithmetic – are rejected from the start. The memories associated with these walks form the basis of *flânerie* – and of Dickens's writing. Chesterton then reminds us that through his writing, Dickens re-members the past, he gathers its fragments to shape it into meaningful experience. To re-member a place in that way, one must live in it, experience it with one's body, but to experience it fully, one must simultaneously 'forget the place', that is, let one's guard down and stop *paying attention*. As in Benjamin's case, vigilant gazing is ineffective – not only must one shut one's eyes to re-member these scenes, but the scenes conscientiously registered with the help of an official guidebook will not be remembered. On the contrary, the scenes which were in the background and reached us through the prism of personal memories will resurface. The chiasmatic reversal of 'place' and 'mind' in the last sentence shows that the mind, with all its personal memories, has to come first. Only scenes which have been acquired through a personal, distracted reading can be 'stamped' onto consciousness and can resist the erosion of time by being re-membered.

Paradoxically, distraction is eye-opening. Only then can the *flâneur* start making sense of the city, as Stierle points out: L'attention vagabonde révèle […] des aspects de la ville détachés de tout système de pertinences. […] Et c'est justement] dans un kaléidoscope de la présence pure qui ne renvoie à rien d'autre que se forme une prescience de l'ensemble vivant de la ville.[83] But this wandering attention can also show what is obvious in a new light, and therefore re-discover the meaning of what has been eclipsed by habit, as is Benjamin's case with street-names: '[Le flâneur] découvre ce qu'il y a au seuil de l'attention du regard public. Il pénètre ce qui a été occulté et refoulé, mais il fait aussi accéder à la conscience ce qui est évident, et, pour cette raison, se dérobe au regard.'[84] Distraction enables the *flâneur* to chance

[83] Karlheinz Stierle, *La Capitale des signes. Paris et son discours*, trans. Marianne Rocher-Jacquin (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2001), 74. 'Wandering attention reveals aspects of the city which are entirely unrelated to any logical system. It is in this kaleidoscope of pure presence which refers to nothing but itself that the living whole formed by the city can let itself be apprehended.'

[84] Stierle, *La Capitale des signes*, 82. 'The *flâneur* reveals what is on the threshold of the gazing public's attention. He fathoms out what has been obscured and repressed, but he also discloses what is obvious, and, which, for that reason, escapes our notice.'

upon the 'relics of meaning' Michel de Certeau talks about: 'Les reliques de sens, et parfois leurs déchets, les gestes inverses de grandes ambitions. Des riens ou des Presque-riens, symbolisent et orientent les pas. Des noms qui ont précisément cessé d'être "propres."'[85] One might say that through his distracted reading of the city, the *flâneur* may come across 'the third meaning'[86] of 'names that have ceased to be proper.' I borrow this term from Barthes, who separates three levels of meaning: an information level, a symbolic level, and a third meaning, which doesn't communicate or signify, and which he calls the obtuse meaning:

> *Obtusus* means *that which is blunted, rounded on form*. […] An obtuse angle is greater than a right angle: *an obtuse angle of 100°*, says the dictionary; the third meaning, the obtuse meaning seems to me greater than the pure perpendicular, the trenchant, legal upright of the narrative […] I even accept, for this obtuse meaning, the word's pejorative connotation: the obtuse meaning seems to extend beyond culture, knowledge, information […] It belongs to the family of puns, useless exertions; indifferent to moral or aesthetic categories (the trivial, the futile, the artificial, the parodic), it sides with the carnival aspect of things.[87]

According to Barthes, the third meaning 'outplays meaning – subverts not the content, but the entire practice of meaning.'[88] Thus, a form of distraction which starts with the body can take the *flâneur* on an interpretative journey which might lead him very far away from what the city immediately offers to his attention. Distraction, the unwillingness to heed directions, could thus be seen as a productive and subversive 'way of operating' in De Certeau's sense:

> 'Ways of operating' constitute the innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production. […They are] clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of 'discipline.'

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[85] Michel de Certeau, 'Marches dans la ville,' in *L'Invention du quotidien; arts de faire 1* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 158. 'People are put in motion by the remaining relics of meaning, and sometimes by their waste products, the inverted remainders of great ambitions. Things that amount to nothing, or almost nothing, symbolize and orient walkers' steps: names that have ceased precisely to be "proper."' (De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 105).

[86] On the links between distracted reading and the third meaning, see Michael Wood, 'Distraction Theory: How to Read While Thinking of Something Else,' *Michigan Quarterly Review*, vol. 48, no. 4 (Fall 2009). <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.act2080.0048.410> [accessed 02/04/2013]

[87] Roland Barthes, 'The Third Meaning' [1971], in *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 44.

[88] Barthes, 'The Third Meaning', 56.

> Pushed to their ideal limits, these procedures and ruses of consumers compose the network of an antidiscipline.[89]

Distraction, in this sense, is an *Ablenkung*, a leading away from the literal, 'official' meaning offered to our eyes, which then turns into a form of reflection which uncovers new meanings. Distraction is a mode of perception leading to a different form of attention. A distracted form of *flânerie*, therefore, may be the key to understanding the city – and the self.

In the words of Crary, 'attention and distraction were not two essentially different states but existed on a single continuum, and thus attention was […] a dynamic process, intensifying and diminishing, rising and falling, ebbing and flowing according to an indeterminate set of variables.' [90] The corporeal activity of passing through the city thus helps stimulate this dynamic process and reach new, productive forms of distraction which shed a new light on the city and give the *flâneur* access to new levels of meaning.

III. The body in time: passing on

In this section, I would like to study the relations which exist between the passing body of the *flâneur* and passing time. I will start by examining how writers represented the relationship between the pace of the *flâneur* and that of the city. This contrast between the collective, ever-accelerating rhythm of the city and the individual rhythm of the *flâneur*'s footsteps highlights the sense of subjectivity which stems from the activity of walking. However, physical movement not only has to do with ontology, but also with philosophy. One might also consider the passing body as an analytic device through which the *flâneur* acquires an acute consciousness of the passage of 'time present and time past.' This particular flâneurial viewpoint has provided critics – the most prominent of whom is Benjamin – with a heuristic method to decipher the past and present of the city.

1. Of Time and the City[91]

[89] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xv.
[90] Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, 47.
[91] See film by Terence Davies, *Of Time and the City* (2008)

First of all, the moving body of the *flâneur*, with its regular pace, seems to be an ideal instrument to take the pulse of the city, to measure its tempo – the *flâneur*'s body can thus not only be compared to a seismograph but also to a stethoscope. The regularity of the *flâneur*'s moving body, like the hands of a clock, measures the rhythm of the city. Aristotle noted this inextricable link between movement and time: 'Not only do we measure the movement by the time, but also the time by the movement, because they define each other. The time marks the movement, since it is its number, and the movement the time.'[92] One might also think of the striding figure depicted at the beginning of William Blake's *The First Book of Urizen*.[93] The stride of the walker can be likened to a compass representing an attempt to apprehend, encompass and measure. On the other hand, this wide-angled gesture signals infinite expansion and hints at the immensity of time and space which the walker can never comprehend in its entirety. At a time when the city is characterised by constant acceleration and limitless expansion, the steady pace and regular stride of the *flâneur* make him an ideal recorder of the city's rapid changes. His slower pace indicates that his temporality is different from that of the city. Nineteenth-century modernity creates a new way of experiencing time. With the advent of the railways, the time of the city becomes clock time, which is repetitive, invariant, and disconnected from its natural rhythms. It is an independent, decontextualized and rationalized time. This time, which is infinitely divisible, is out of step with man's natural rhythm. For Lyotard, clock time, or sequential 'time disrupts, rather than guarantees, rhythms of temporal continuity.'[94] By contrast, I would relate the pace of the *flâneur* to what John Urry has named 'glacial time,' which he defines as a time which 'seeks to slow time down to "nature's speed." And he adds that 'Glacial time is extremely slow-moving and ponderous, desynchronized from both clock and instantaneous times.'[95] The time of the *flâneur*, which is naturally that of the body – of regular breathing, of the beating heart, of the circadian rhythm (or sleep-wake cycle) – enhances by contrast the frantic rhythm of the modern city. The anecdotes relating that Nerval once walked a lobster on the end of a long blue ribbon,[96] or that

[92] Aristotle, *Physics* [350 B.C.] (translated by R. P. Hardie and R. K. Gaye), Book 4, chapter 12.
[93] William Blake, *The First Book of Urizen*, plate 3. Relief etching, 15.0 x 10.2 cm., 1794, colour printed with touches of hand tinting with brush and pen and ink c. 1794. Robert N. Essick collection.
[94] Elissa Marder, *Temporal Disorders in the Wake of Modernity (Baudelaire and Flaubert)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 4.
[95] John Urry, 'Speeding up and slowing down' in Hartmut Rosa, William E. Scheuerman (eds.), *High-Speed Society: Social Acceleration, Power, and Modernity*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2009), 194.
[96] Arvède Barine, IV. La Folie. — Gérard de Nerval – Dernière partie, in 'Essais de littérature pathologique' in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1897, vol. 144), 135. 'On se décida à le faire soigner un jour qu'on l'avait trouvé au Palais-Royal traînant un homard vivant au bout d'un ruban bleu.'

'in 1839 it was considered elegant to take a tortoise out walking […] in the arcades' (AP [M3, 8], 422), clearly aim at dramatizing the deliberate rejection of the tempo of the city by the *flâneur* and at affirming his predilection for a more natural rhythm – glacial time as opposed to clock time.

The *flâneur*'s slow pace clearly emphasises that the modern city is a fast-paced city which gives unprecedented prominence to what is new – and thus to what is transient, transitory, fleeting, what passes away quickly. As Sylviane Agacinski points out, before the advent of modernity, it was human life – and the human body – which was deemed to be brief, fragile and fleeting.[97] However, nineteenth-century urban modernity reverses this, and the pace of the *flâneur* highlights, by contrast, the fragility and transience of the modern city. The pace and rhythm of the walking body are seen as more stable and more permanent than the form of the city, as Baudelaire shows us in his famous poem 'Le Cygne': 'Comme je traversais le nouveau Carrousel. Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville Change plus vite, hélas! que le cœur d'un mortel).'[98] Here, walking across the new Carrousel brings the ephemerality of the city into focus. The regular rhythms of the body – its pace and heartbeat – are contrasted with the ever-changing shape of the city. In a way, the human body, despite being 'mortal' – nothing but a passing shadow – is deemed to be more permanent than the transient city. His slowness dramatizes by contrast the evanescent nature of the city: 'Le flâneur parisien […] est le témoin d'un monde en train de passer, comme une couleur pâlit, il assiste à l'événement même du vieillissement de la ville. Les choses s'en vont sous ses yeux, comme s'éloignent les paysages sous le regard des spectateurs de dioramas.'[99] The *flâneur*, walking at a regular, leisurely pace along the city streets, perceives the difference between his temporality and that of the city. His essential out-of-stepness puts him in an ideal position to witness, take in and ponder the rapid successive changes which affect the city and to distance himself from the frenzied rhythm of its inhabitants.

[97] Sylviane Agacinski, *Le Passeur de temps, modernité et nostalgie* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), 65.
[98] Baudelaire, 'Le Cygne', in *Les Fleurs du mal*, Charles Baudelaire, 'Préface', *Le Spleen de Paris*, in Claude Pichois (ed.), *Charles Baudelaire, Œuvres Complètes* (OC), 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Collection 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade', 1975), vol. 1, 85. 'As I walked across the new Carrousel. — Old Paris is no more (the form of a city Changes more quickly, alas! than the human heart).' (William Aggeler (trans.), *The Flowers of Evil* (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954).
[99] Agacinski, *Le Passeur de temps*, 65. 'The Parisian *flâneur* watches the spectacle of a world passing away like a fading colour, he witnesses the actual event of the ageing of the city. Things fade away before his very eyes, just as landscapes fade away before the eyes of the viewer of a diorama.'

The passing *flâneur*'s task is thus to glean elements from the passing city all around him. A walk is ephemeral, but for its duration it highlights the spatial and temporal character of the city flowing past the moving body and thereby makes perceptible the pure transience that governs urban life. Representations of the city all insist on the transitory aspect of passing city life. Nancy Forgione, in her study of pictorial representations of urban walking, contends that in the second half of the nineteenth century, Paris became a city on the move, and transience came to inform pictorial representations of the city and even fashion. She mentions that 'Blanc, in his 1877 book *Art in Ornament and Dress*, observed that even current women's fashions seemed predicated on the idea of rapid movement: the silhouettes of dresses and hairstyles looked "as though they were always to be seen in profile"[100] as the wearer hastened past.'[101] The transient nature of the city is not only perceptible in the fashion of the day, it is inscribed in its very architecture. Nowhere is it more obvious to the *flâneur* than in the Parisian arcades or *passages*. Benjamin explains that on the one hand, the Parisian arcades epitomize the triumph of progress, innovation, luxury and commodity culture. On the other hand, the fact that these intricate iron and glass structures quickly became outmoded – their very obsolescence – bears witness to the fact that everything passes. The replacement of gas lighting by electricity exemplifies how this process works: 'So long as the gas lamps, even the oil lamps were burning in them, the arcades were a fairy place. […] The decline sets in with electric lighting. […] The inner radiance of the arcades faded with the blaze of electric lights and withdrew into their names' (AP <D°, 6>, 834). It is through the *flâneur*'s deliberate slowing down that he comes to an awareness of the transient nature of the city. The slower pace of the *flâneur* points up and subversively comments on the speed, business and consumer culture of the city. To be absorbed by the crowd and adopt its pace is, in a way, to become a commodity, as Frédéric Gros explains:

> La foule, c'est de faire l'expérience d'un devenir-marchandise. Je suis un produit offert à des mouvements anonymes. Je m'offre, je m'abandonne à la circulation. Je suis consommé par les mouvements qui contraignent mon corps. [...] Je suis consommé par les rues, par les boulevards. Les enseignes et les vitrines n'existent

[100] Charles Blanc, *Art in Ornament and Dress* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1877), 273.
[101] Forgione, 'Everyday Life in Motion', 87, 4 (December 2005), 681.

> que pour intensifier la circulation, l'échange des marchandises. Le flâneur ni ne consomme ni n'est consommé. Il pratique le glanage ou même le vol.[102]

As can be seen here, the slowness of the *flâneur*'s body is what sets him apart from the crowd, puts him out of step with it and singularizes him.

The *flâneur*'s slower pace thus highlights the modern city's transient nature, which paradoxically points to the return of the always-the-same. This is very striking in Dickens's *Sketches by Boz*, particularly in 'Shops and their Tenants.' After insisting on the importance of walking through the city and observing it – in other words, of being a *flâneur*, Boz explains that one of his 'principal amusements is to watch the gradual progress—the rise or fall—of particular shops' (SBB, 80). He describes how various tenants successively set up different types of businesses in a house which starts as a ruin, is renovated and then reverts back to being a ruin in a never-ending cycle of transformations. Boz comes to realize that in spite of the surface of constant transformations, nothing really changes. The *flâneur* is struck by the continuity of the ceaseless changes which affect the city. The *flâneur*'s immersion in the city made him realize that 'the modem city offered an eternal hic et nunc, whose content was transience, but whose transience was permanent.'[103] This idea of the permanence of change runs through many of the *Sketches by Boz*, and characterizes Boz's London. In 'Meditations in Monmouth-street', after having described the changes that have occurred in the fashion of the clothes sold on this street, Boz declares that 'it is the times that have changed, not Monmouth-street' (SBB, 97). This short-story illustrates and epitomizes the 'strange ever-changing changelessness'[104] which characterizes the modern city. Interestingly, Benjamin draws the same conclusions in his study of nineteenth-century fashion in the *Arcades Project*. For him, fashion's cyclical nature means it is both relentless and static, and is a synecdoche which reflects the functioning of the city. Benjamin noted that 'fashion is the endless production and consumption of the always-the-same dressed up in the deceptive attire of the ever-new.'[105] The *flâneur*, through his regular pace, is thus in an ideal position to perceive the

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[102] Frédéric Gros, *Marcher. Une Philosophie* (Paris: Carnets Nord, 2009), 240-1. 'To be in the crowd is to become a commodity. I become a product which is offered up to anonymous movements. I offer myself up, I give myself over to circulation. I am consumed by the movements which constrain my body. I am consumed by the streets, the boulevards. The shop signs and shop windows exist only to increase circulation and the exchange of goods. The *flâneur* does not consume, nor is he consumed. His practice is that of gleaning, or even theft.'

[103] Carl E. Schorske, 'The Idea of the City in European Thought: Voltaire to Spengler', in Oscar Handlin, (ed.) *The Historian and the City* (Cambridge: M.I.T. and Harvard, 1963), 109.

[104] F.S. Schwarzbach, *Dickens and the City* (London: The Athlone Press, 1979), 37.

[105] Graeme Gilloch, *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 121.

paradox inherent to the modern city: urban modernity is defined by the permanence of transience. It is thus through his living, moving body embedded in time and space that the *flâneur* comes to terms with the temporality of the city. His slower pace acts as a dramatic counterpoint to the frantic pace of the city, which seems to be characterized by transience and ever-renewed change. Capturing the essence of passage and fleetingness is at the heart of many nineteenth-century poems and novels about the city, which is why the passing *flâneur* becomes a privileged instrument for many authors during that period.

As a transition towards the next section of this chapter, I would like to dwell on Baudelaire's poem 'À une passante,' since it seems to encapsulate this aesthetics of transience, where the significant moment can only be brief, momentary and fleeting. In this sonnet, the 'I' of the poem can only seize a few features of the passer-by 'in a flash': a stately hand, a leg like a statue's, and a pair of fine eyes. The several enjambments contained in the poem endow the verses with a fluidity which is evocative of the transience of the passer-by. The transience of this aesthetic moment is perhaps most efficiently epitomized in the third verse of the poem, which is like a lightning flash itself: 'une femme passa.' The concision of these words, together with the tense used here – the *passé simple* – which designates an event of short duration that is over – encapsulate the fleetingness of the encounter with admirable economy. The very essence of the encounter is contained in this fleeting moment, which becomes a defining aesthetic criteria for Baudelaire: 'La modernité, c'est le transitoire, le fugitif, le contingent, la moitié de l'art, dont l'autre moitié est l'éternel et l'immuable.'[106] For Baudelaire, eternal beauty can only be grasped through what is transient and fleeting. In previous centuries, transience was seen as incompatible with the eternal, and thus with *being*, as Agacinski explains: 'Selon une longue tradition en effet – avec laquelle il est difficile de rompre – le *passager* a été conçu comme la négation de l'éternel, donc de l'être. Ce qui ne pouvait durer, rester absolument, ne pouvait pas *être*.'[107] The advent of modernity reverses this view of things: 'La conscience moderne est celle du passage et du passager. Nous pensons désormais que tout arrive et passe. Rien de fixe ne donne aux choses de quoi s'ancrer

[106] Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la Vie moderne', OC, vol. 2, 695. 'By "modernity" I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable.' (trans. Mayne, 13.)
[107] 'An ancient tradition – from which it is very difficult to move away – established that what is transient is the very negation of what is eternal, and thus of being. According to it, what could not last or remain permanently could not *be*.' (Agacinski, *Le Passeur de temps*, 20).

pour résister au temps.'[108] Not only does Baudelaire become aware of the ephemeral nature of being through the activity of walking, he also uses the aesthetics of the *flâneur*'s perception of the changing city to represent and crystalize this new ontology according to which *being* is seen as transient.

2. From passing by to passing on: 'Is the true self this which stands on the pavement?'[109]

'Je ne peins pas l'être; je peins le passage.' Montaigne.[110]

Agacinski tells us that modern philosophy signals the advent of a new ontology which embraces human finitude: *being* becomes associated with what passes by, on, or away. The *flâneur* seems to embody and capture this new ontology since he always observes the city and its inhabitants in passing. Through his movements, he becomes acutely aware of the passing of time, which is also a bodily experience. There are visible and metaphorical links between the physical act of passing by, passing time, and the idea of passing away – the simple form 'passing'[111] is sometimes used as a synonym for dying. The time it takes to get across the metres and the paving-stones of the city gives the *flâneur* a special awareness of the passing of time and of the brevity of life. If scientific time can be measured, individual time may speed up or slow down, and the walker is finely attuned to these shifts in the perception of individual time. Henri Bergson called the internal experience of time that forms the basis of the true self *durée* (or duration). Duration is intrinsically linked to the process of incessant change which characterizes human consciousness, as Bergson explains:

> La vérité est que nous changeons sans cesse et que l'état lui-même est déjà du changement. C'est dire qu'il n'y a pas de différence essentielle entre passer d'un état à un autre et persister dans le même état. Si l'état qui 'reste le même' est plus

[108] 'Agacinski, *Le Passeur de temps,* 19. 'Modern consciousness is that of passage and of what is passing. We now think that everything comes to pass and passes away. Things cannot fix themselves onto anything stable to resist passing time.'
[109] Woolf, 'Street Haunting', 182.
[110] Michel de Montaigne, 'Du Repentir', *Les Essais*, 1575, livre III, chapitre 2. 'I cannot fix my object; […]; I do not paint its being, I paint its passage.' (Michel de Montaigne, 'On Repentance' in William Carew Hazlitt (ed.), *The Essays of Montaigne*, Charles Cotton (trans.), 1877, book III, chapter 2.)
[111] 'pass, *v.*: To die. Now chiefly *N. Amer.* and in *Spiritualism*.' OED.

varié qu'on ne le croit, inversement le passage d'un état a un autre ressemble plus qu'on ne se l'imagine à un même état qui se prolonge; la transition est continue.[112]

For Bergson, being is passing from one state to another, and duration is the experience of this state of permanent change, which is why walking seems to be well-suited to the experience of *durée*. This section of my analysis will dwell on the links between this ontology of passage and *flânerie* – the action of passing by and moving on.

We perceive time through the movements of our body: biology is inseparable from time, rhythms and repetitive physical action: breathing, waking and sleeping, maturing and aging, are all activities which are closely intertwined with our perception of time. Walking, in its rhythmic repetition, in the systole-diastole of the left-right step, seems like it might belong to this category of activities, yet its ongoing quality is bounded by a beginning and an end, thus rendering it conducive to the experience of *durée*. Through walking, the *flâneur* truly becomes acquainted with the passing of time and of his being. Alain Vaillant explains that the idea that perception and self-perception was a very physical action which was rooted in the body was a prominent theory throughout the century. He mentions Destutt de Tracy's *L'Idéologie*, an influential French essay published in 1801, to illustrate this point: 'Selon lui, la perception était active, et non subie par la conscience: par l'action musculaire, le sujet éprouve à la fois sa volonté propre et la résistance du réel; par le même geste, il s'assure de son existence et de celle du monde extérieur.'[113] Walking was thus seen as a physical activity which had to do self-perception. On the one hand, the very physical movements of the *flâneur* make him aware of the substantiality of his being. On the other hand, paradoxically, his regular pace directs his attention to the passing of time and to the transience of being.

First, I would like to come back to the case of Jo, the crossing sweeper from *Bleak House*. As was said before, Jo is not a *flâneur*, but for that reason, he can expose the processes

[112] Henri Bergson, *L'évolution créatrice* [1907] (Paris: PUF, 1959), 496. 'The truth is we change without ceasing, and that the state itself is nothing but change. There is no essential difference between passing from one state to another and persisting in the same state. If the state which "remains the same" is more varied than we think, [then] on the other hand the passing from one state to another resembles—more than we imagine—a single state being prolonged: transition is continuous.' (*Creative Evolution* (1911) trans. Arthur Mitchell (London: Macmillan & Co, 1922), 2.)

[113] Alain Vaillant, *La crise de la littérature: Romantisme et modernité* (Grenoble: ELLUG, 2005), 173. 'According to him, perception was profoundly active, and not something which consciousness was subjected to: through muscular action, the subject tests both his own will and the tangibility of reality; through a single gesture, he reassures himself of his own existence and of that of the external world.'

that are inherent to the activity of passage. We demonstrated earlier that Jo's sensuous experience of passage through the city was a way to reach a form self-perception. What is also striking in passages which describe Jo is that that it is through movement that he seems to acquire a form of subjectivity. 'Moving on' and 'being moved on' is what defines him. In chapter 19 – aptly entitled 'Moving on' – we can see that Jo's first instinct is to move on: 'Jo, whose immediate object seems to be to get away on any terms, gives a shuffling nod.'[114] As he moves on (uncharacteristically) to sit for a while, everything around him keeps moving on and passing him by: 'There he sits, the sun going down, the river running fast, the crowd flowing by him in two streams--everything moving on to some purpose and to one end--until he is stirred up and told to "move on" too.'[115] Seeing the crowd and natural elements 'moving on' seems to give Jo an awareness of passing time, of teleological time, since he concludes that everything is 'moving on to some purpose and to one end.' However, it is especially through moving on himself and being moved on that Jo starts understanding who he is. Jo comes to a form of degraded subjectivity through his interpellations from the police who tell him to move on. For Judith Butler, subject positions are conferred and assumed through the action of hailing.[116] She draws the idea of hailing or interpellation from Althusser:

> I suggest that ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!' Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was 'really' addressed to him, and that 'it was really him who was hailed' (and not someone else).[117]

What is striking in this passage is that being hailed seems to be very physical: the senses of sight and hearing are called upon before the whole body is set in motion. Similarly, Jo's constant experience of being moved on – or hailed – is intensely physical. Jo comes to a form

[114] Dickens, *Bleak House*, chap. 19, 314.
[115] Dickens, *Bleak House*, chap. 19, 315.
[116] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press), 1997.
[117] Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,' in *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 174.

of subjectivity by being hailed, which in his case, is made up of unpleasant bodily sensations, thus exposing the violence inherent in interpellation. Paradoxically, it is by being like 'the blinded oxen, over-goaded, over-driven, never guided,' by 'running into the wrong places' and being 'beaten out,'[118] that he comes to see where he is, where he moves and, to a certain extent, what he is: 'To be hustled, and jostled, and moved on; and really to feel that it would appear to be perfectly true that I have no business here […], and yet to be perplexed by the consideration that I AM here somehow, too, and everybody overlooked me until I became the creature that I am!'[119] This passage shows that the very physical experience of passage is inextricably linked with the formation of the subject's identity.

Let us now look at the case of another literary character whose life is marked by his peripatetic activities. The intertwining of passing time, subjectivity and an awareness of the passing of the self through walking is particularly striking in Victor Hugo's 1862 novel *Les Misérables*. Beginning in 1815 and culminating during the 1832 June Rebellion in Paris, this historical novel follows the life of several characters, notably that of the ex-convict Jean Valjean. Alain Vaillant has remarked that his steady pace echoes throughout the novel's seventeen-year time span and guides us all the way through the text.[120] His pace is as regular as the ticking of a clock and one could say that it is a reminder of, and the measure of, passing time – of both Valjean's inexorable ageing and the passing of historical time. To once more turn to De Certeau's analogy, one might say that Valjean writes the 'thick and thins' of his biography through the movements of his body, with his footsteps. Significantly, Hugo chooses to introduce Jean Valjean to the readers by drawing a portrait of an anonymous man walking in a chapter entitled 'The evening of a day of walking' ('Le soir d'un jour de marche'). In a way, walking comes before identity, since the very first glimpse of the hero we get is that of a solitary walker, a vagabond without a name and of unknown origins, his face half-concealed under his hat: 'Une casquette à visière de cuir rabattue cachait en partie son visage, brûlé par le soleil et le hâle, et ruisselant de sueur. [...] La sueur, la chaleur, le voyage à pied, la poussière, ajoutaient je ne sais quoi de sordide à cet ensemble délabré.'[121] Each time

[118] Dickens, *Bleak House*, chapter 16, 258.
[119] Dickens, *Bleak House*, chapter 16, 257-8.
[120] Vaillant, *La crise de la littérature*, 180. 'N'étant de nulle part, Jean Valjean marche, partout et toujours, de son allure régulière et résignée.' 'Originating from nowhere, Jean Valjean walks everywhere, constantly, with his steady pace, resigned to his fate.'
[121] Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables* [1862], éd. Maurice Allem (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1986), vol. 1, livre II, chap.1, p. 63. 'A cap with a drooping leather visor partly concealed his face, burned and tanned

Hugo depicts Jean Valjean walking, he emphasises the physicality of this activity: we are made to feel the exertion and muscular efforts it demands, we feel the weight of the body – and the bodily – which is inherent to this movement. However, we also have access to the reflections which walking engenders. In this instance, a profound feeling of solitude and alienation associated with the gaze of others pervades the passage: 'Les rares habitants qui se trouvaient en ce moment à leurs fenêtres ou sur le seuil de leurs maisons regardaient ce voyageur avec une sorte d'inquiétude.'[122] This is all the more striking as this sentence comes before the description of the source of this uneasiness, who turns out to be no other than the anonymous vagrant, Jean Valjean himself. It seems that depictions of Jean Valjean walking come at crucial moment in the novel – moments of anagnorisis, turning points or kairotic moments in his life. Walking is a structuring device which informs both the plot of the novel and the life of the protagonist. This is particularly striking in a passage where we see him walking after his transformative encounter with Bishop Myriel:

> Jean Valjean […] se mit à marcher en toute hâte dans les champs, prenant les chemins et les sentiers qui se présentaient sans s'apercevoir qu'il revenait à chaque instant sur ses pas. Il erra ainsi toute la matinée, n'ayant pas mangé et n'ayant pas faim. Il était en proie à une foule de sensations nouvelles. Il se sentait une sorte de colère; il ne savait contre qui. Il n'eût pu dire s'il était touché ou humilié. Il lui venait par moments un attendrissement étrange qu'il combattait et auquel il opposait l'endurcissement de ses vingt dernières années. […] Ces souvenirs [d'enfance] lui étaient presque insupportables, tant il y avait longtemps qu'ils ne lui étaient apparus. Des pensées inexprimables s'amoncelèrent ainsi en lui toute la journée.[123]

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by sun and wind, and dripping with perspiration. [...] The sweat, the heat, the journey on foot, the dust, added I know not what sordid quality to this dilapidated whole.' (*Les Misérables*, trans. Isabel F. Hapgood, (New York: Thomas E. Crowell & Co., 1887).)

[122] Hugo, *Les Misérables*, vol. 1, II, 13, p. 63. 'The few inhabitants who were at their windows or on their thresholds at the moment stared at this traveller with a sort of uneasiness.' (trans. Isabel F. Hapgood)

[123] Hugo, *Les Misérables*, vol. 1, II, 13, p. 113-4. Jean Valjean […] set out at a very hasty pace through the fields, taking whatever roads and paths presented themselves to him, without perceiving that he was incessantly retracing his steps. He wandered thus the whole morning, without having eaten anything and without feeling hungry. He was the prey of a throng of novel sensations. He was conscious of a sort of rage; he did not know against whom it was directed. He could not have told whether he was touched or humiliated. There came over him at moments a strange emotion which he resisted and to which he opposed the hardness acquired during the last twenty years of his life. […] These [childhood] memories were almost intolerable to him, it was so long since they had recurred to him. Unutterable thoughts assembled within him in this manner all day long.' (trans. Isabel F. Hapgood)

In this passage, his distracted ramblings are intertwined with the progressive awakening of his conscience caused by the bishop's touching act of kindness towards him. His going back and forth through the landscape reflects his inner confusion as long-forgotten feelings and buried memories resurface. This walk corresponds to a crucial moment of self-recognition which will change the course of the novel – and of his life. His strolls through the countryside around Montreuil-sur-Mer,[124] his life-changing encounter with Cosette as he marches through the forest of Montfermeil,[125] his stealthy yet calm zig-zagging through the streets of Paris to escape Javert's relentless tracking,[126] and his final escape from Javert through the sewers[127] are all important landmarks in the plot and in Valjean's existence. All these defining moments are marked by his regular, unfaltering pace – he never runs. Thus, not only does his steady pace remind us of passing chronological time, but Jean Valjean's walks themselves are landmarks which structure his life and the plot of the novel and give us a sense of individual time – a time rooted in personal experience as opposed to a strict quantitative sense of time. These walks are also intrinsic to the subject's mental reality and the construction of the sense of self – attention, emotion and memory play a crucial part in time perception, and self-perception, as can be seen in Valjean's walk after he has met with the bishop. Alain Vaillant argues that the footsteps we hear throughout the novel are perhaps as much Hugo's as they are Valjean's, walking having been at the core of his writing routine throughout his life: 'Ce roman polyphonique, qui enchevêtre une multitude de vies et d'histoires, ne cesse de laisser entendre le rythme d'un pas familier: ce qui prouve […] qu'un texte autobiographique est lové au cœur du récit populaire et social.'[128] Valjean's walks may be based on Hugo's own walks during which the body and the body's perceptions, attention, distraction and memory come together to create 'moments of being'[129] which are constitutive of the subject's sense of self. The body remembers and stores knowledge, and has an important role in making memories emerge into consciousness.[130] Walking is thus conducive

[124] Hugo, *Les Misérables*, vol. 1, V, 3, p. 171.
[125] Hugo, *Les Misérables*, vol. 2, III, 6, p. 406.
[126] Hugo, *Les Misérables*, vol. 2, V, 1, p. 462.
[127] Hugo, *Les Misérables*, vol. 5, III, 1-9, pp. 1301–1333.
[128] Vaillant, *La crise de la littérature*, 180. 'Throughout this polyphonic novel, which intertwines a multitude of lives and stories, we keep hearing the regular sound of a familiar pace, which proves that an autobiographical text lies at the heart of this great social popular tale.'
[129] See Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind, 2nd ed. (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985).
[130] See Bergson, *Matter and Memory* [1896].

to an awareness of the passing of time which is inextricably linked to the perception of duration, and therefore of subjectivity.

This connection between passing time and passing self is explicit in the earlier-cited Chesterton passage describing the connection between Dickens's childhood and his walks. As a child, Dickens 'drifted over half London'[131] and walking 'stamped' the streets and scenes of his childhood on his mind forever. Chesterton explains that for Dickens, 'the only way to remember a place for ever is to live in the place for an hour,' that is, to experience it body and soul. As a result, during his later *flâneries,* Dickens could see both modern London and the London of his childhood (as is the case with Paris in Baudelaire's *Le Cygne*). To use his own words, one could say that for Dickens, 'London was a sooty spectre, divided in purpose between being visible and invisible, and so being wholly neither.'[132] Indeed for the *flâneur*, images of the spectral past become superimposed onto images of the present city. Dickens's *flâneries* around the London streets were a way to reawaken, re-live and re-member the London of his childhood along with its marking experiences. Walking at his own pace through the fast-paced city was a way for Dickens to re-read, re-member and re-write his past and the London of his past. Victor Hugo too talks about the Paris of his past in an instance of imaginary *flânerie* which is strikingly similar to that of Dickens's or Baudelaire's physical *flâneries*:

> Depuis qu[e l'auteur] l'a quitté, Paris s'est transformé. Une ville nouvelle a surgi qui lui est en quelque sorte inconnue. Il n'a pas besoin de dire qu'il aime Paris; Paris est la ville natale de son esprit. Par suite des démolitions et des reconstructions, le Paris de sa jeunesse, ce Paris qu'il a religieusement emporté dans sa mémoire, est à cette heure un Paris d'autrefois. Qu'on lui permette de parler de ce Paris-là comme s'il existait encore. Il est possible que là où l'auteur va conduire les lecteurs en disant: 'Dans telle rue il y a telle maison,' il n'y ait plus aujourd'hui ni maison ni rue. Les lecteurs vérifieront, s'ils veulent en prendre la peine. Quant à lui, il ignore le Paris nouveau, et il écrit avec le Paris ancien devant les yeux dans une illusion qui lui est précieuse. C'est une douceur pour lui de rêver qu'il reste derrière lui quelque chose de ce qu'il voyait quand il était dans son pays,

[131] G.K. Chesterton, *Dickens*, quoted in AP [M11, 2, 3], 438.
[132] Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* [1864-5] (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), Part 3, chap. 1, 420.

> et que tout ne s'est pas évanoui. Tant qu'on va et vient dans le pays natal, on s'imagine que ces rues vous sont indifférentes, que ces fenêtres, ces toits et ces portes ne vous sont de rien, que ces murs vous sont étrangers, que ces arbres sont les premiers arbres venus, que ces maisons où l'on n'entre pas vous sont inutiles, que ces pavés où l'on marche sont des pierres. Plus tard, quand on n'y est plus, on s'aperçoit que ces rues vous sont chères, que ces toits, ces fenêtres et ces portes vous manquent, que ces murailles vous sont nécessaires, que ces arbres sont vos bien-aimés, que ces maisons où l'on n'entrait pas on y entrait tous les jours, et qu'on a laissé de ses entrailles, de son sang et de son cœur dans ces pavés. […] Qu'il nous soit donc permis de parler du passé au présent.[133]

This is the opening passage of a chapter entitled 'The zigzaggings of Strategy,' which evokes the winding physical and mental journeys of the *flâneur*/author. The passage shows the importance of memory in the flâneurial process and in the constitution of selfhood. The author's claim to have the right to 'speak of the past in the present [tense]' is repeated twice and frames the passage. 'The Paris of days gone by' is clearly of more consequence to the author than modern Paris, which to him is insubstantial, since he is unacquainted with it. With his words, he is literally re-membering and re-constructing a Paris which has been demolished, as he does when he says 'In such a street there stands such and such a house' for instance. His words and memory have the power to conjure up his walks through Paris. The streets, roofs, doors and walls appear to us one after another as they would to the *flâneur* meandering through the *vieux Paris*. There is something intensely physical, almost visceral, in his relationship with this cityscape, since his heart, blood and viscera are inextricably linked

[133] Hugo, *Les Misérables*, vol. 2, V, 1, p. 462-3. 'Paris has been transformed since [the author of this book] quitted it. A new city has arisen, which is, after a fashion, unknown to him. There is no need for him to say that he loves Paris: Paris is his mind's natal city. In consequence of demolitions and reconstructions, the Paris of his youth, that Paris which he bore away religiously in his memory, is now a Paris of days gone by. He must be permitted to speak of that Paris as though it still existed. It is possible that when the author conducts his readers to a spot and says, "In such a street there stands such and such a house," neither street nor house will any longer exist in that locality. Readers may verify the facts if they care to take the trouble. For his own part, he is unacquainted with the new Paris, and he writes with the old Paris before his eyes in an illusion which is precious to him. It is a delight to him to dream that there still lingers behind him something of that which he beheld when he was in his own country, and that all has not vanished. So long as you go and come in your native land, you imagine that those streets are a matter of indifference to you; that those windows, those roofs, and those doors are nothing to you; that those walls are strangers to you; that those trees are merely the first encountered haphazard; that those houses, which you do not enter, are useless to you; that the pavements which you tread are merely stones. Later on, when you are no longer there, you perceive that the streets are dear to you; that you miss those roofs, those doors; and that those walls are necessary to you, those trees are well beloved by you; that you entered those houses which you never entered, every day, and that you have left a part of your heart, of your blood, of your soul, in those pavements. […] May we, then, be permitted to speak of the past in the present?' (trans. Isabel F. Hapgood)

to ‘those pavements.’ In this instance, the links between the cityscape and mindscape – or identity – of the author are made evident, and it is through the physical passage through the city but also through the passage of time that these ties are formed and strengthened. Both mental and physical *flâneries* thus enable an anamnestic process through which the *flâneur* can explore the recesses of his memory and of the self in his own time. Jean-François Lyotard has noted the contrast between the temporalities of modern time and that of subjective time:

> Development imposes the saving of time. To go fast is to forget fast, only the information that is useful afterwards, as in ‘rapid reading.’ But writing and reading which advance backwards in the direction of the unknown thing ‘within’ are slow. One loses one’s time seeking time lost. Anamnesis is the other pole – not even that, there is no common access – the other of acceleration and abbreviation.[134]

Flânerie goes against the fast-paced, forward-moving city, it is a slowing down, and even a going backwards in time to explore ‘unknown things within,’ it privileges subjective time, duration and introspection.

The physical practice of *flânerie* also influences flâneurial writing, that is, passages written by *flâneurs* or which bear the mark of a form of wandering. Flâneurial writing too insists on idiosyncratic, subjective time. I would like to use the famous case of the two endings of Dickens’s 1861 novel *Great Expectations* to demonstrate how flâneurial time differs from the linear time conventionally used in realist novels. Dickens’s first version – which was the one he preferred – is a rejection of traditional endings and of the notion of a teleologically-oriented time. It does not bring the story to a single conclusion and happy ending. It does not tie all the loose ends but, on the contrary, it seems to privilege Pip’s immediate present and opt for idiosyncratic time:

> I was in England again — in London, and walking along Piccadilly with little Pip — when a servant came running after me to ask would I step back to a lady in a carriage who wished to speak to me. It was a little pony carriage, which the lady was driving; and the lady and I looked sadly enough on one another.

[134] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman* [1988] (Stanford University Press, 1991), 3.

> "I am greatly changed, I know; but I thought you would like to shake hands with Estella, too, Pip. Lift up that pretty child and let me kiss it!" (She supposed the child, I think, to be my child.)
>
> I was very glad afterwards to have had the interview; for, in her face and in her voice, and in her touch, she gave me the assurance, that suffering had been stronger than Miss Havisham's teaching, and had given her a heart to understand what my heart used to be.[135]

Here, Pip walks along the streets of London when his steady progress is interrupted by a servant asking him to 'step back.' This deviation from his course – which is very much in the flâneurial spirit – leads him to step back into vanished time and cross paths again with Estella, whom he has not encountered for four years. Dickens purposefully chooses to digress from the straight and narrow path of linear, chronological time, and makes us jump back and forth in time in a way which is much more true to life. He leaves us hanging in Pip's present, suspended between past and future, and leaves the ending unresolved. Dickens thus deliberately queers and circumvents conventional endings. But this ending did not satisfy his editor Bulwer Lytton, who asked Dickens to rewrite it along more traditional or 'straighter' lines.[136] Nathalie Jaëck points out that by exaggerating and over-staging the conventionality of the second ending, Dickens exposes the realist novel as an imposter.[137] In the first, open, ending of the novel, Dickens leaves us in the midst of time, of what is happening. To use Bergson's distinction, one might say he prefers the mobility of time over the immobility of the line.[138] The first ending is thus a form of dissidence, of going astray – of *loiterature* – which distorts the straight line of chronological time. Chambers defines *loiterature* as 'beguiling narration as an alternative to narrative closure,' which could apply very well to the flâneurial ending of *Great Expectations*. He also evokes Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* as a

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[135] Dickens, *Great Expectations*, 492.

[136] John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, 3 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1870), vol. 2, 206. '"You will be surprised," he wrote, "to hear that I have changed the end of *Great Expectations* from and after Pip's return to Joe's, and finding his little likeness there. Bulwer, who has been, as I think you know, extraordinarily taken by the book, so strongly urged it upon me, after reading the proofs, and supported his view with such good reasons, that I resolved to make the change. You shall have it when you come back to town. I have put in as pretty a little piece of writing as I could, and I have no doubt the story will be more acceptable through the alteration."'

[137] Nathalie Jaëck, *Charles Dickens. L'écriture comme pouvoir, l'écriture comme résistance* (Paris: Ophrys, 2008), 70. 'En exagérant cette fin typique, en la mettant en scène, Dickens semble vouloir illustrer la supercherie du roman réaliste, en dévoiler l'imposture.'

[138] Henri Bergson, *La pensée et le Mouvant* (Paris: Editions Puf Quadrige, 2008), 3. 'La ligne qu'on mesure est immobile, le temps est mobilité. La ligne est du tout fait. Le temps est ce qui se fait, et même ce qui fait que tout se fait.' 'The line one measures is immobile, time is mobility. The line is made, it is complete; time is what is happening, and more than that, it is what causes everything to happen.' (*The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison, (Dover Publications, 2010), 2.

paragon of *loiterature*, and one cannot help but think about the convoluted time-lines its author draws to represent the digressions his mind and writing embark upon. This form of *loiterature* is an attempt to draw closer to the way the subject experiences passing time – and life. *Flânerie* and flâneurial writing are therefore ways to examine duration and probe subjectivity.

To conclude this section, I would like to quote an extract from Woolf's 'Street Haunting':

> Is the true self this which stands on the pavement in January, or that which bends over the balcony in June? Am I here, or am I there? Or is the true self neither this nor that, neither here nor there, but something so varied and wandering that it is only when we give the rein to its wishes and let it take its way unimpeded that we are indeed ourselves? [139]

As previous examples have shown, in the nineteenth century, *flânerie* is already deeply involved with the ontology of transience which Woolf describes so well here. As can be seen here, it is both a wandering and a wondering, which invites the *flâneur* – or *flâneuse* – to explore the inner recesses of the self. In this typical case of *flânerie*, Woolf analyses her own subjectivity by borrowing and shedding the identities of other passers-by: 'And what greater delight and wonder can there be than to leave the straight lines of personality and deviate into those footpaths that lead beneath brambles and thick tree trunks into the heart of the forest where live those wild beasts, our fellow men?'[140] Once again, serpentine, meandering lines are preferred to straight lines, and identity is envisaged as fluid, changing, and transient. The *flâneur*'s passing body, constantly crossing paths with other passing bodies, is thus keenly aware of the passing of time and beings, which enables him to acquire an acute consciousness of duration and selfhood. Activity, movement, is identity for him.

3. The passing body as analytic device: 'Thinking, annotating, expounding goes on at a prodigious rate all around us and over everything'[141]

[139] Woolf, 'Street Haunting', 182.
[140] Woolf, 'Street Haunting', 187.
[141] Woolf, 'Street haunting', 184.

Finally, I would like to probe the idea that physical passage might also be envisaged as a heuristic device, a method rooted in experience which may lead to new ways of thinking about the city. To do so, I will examine Benjamin's unfinished work *The Arcades Project* or *Passagenwerk*, largely made up of fragments of nineteenth-century texts, so much so that one might envisage it as a sort of vast echo-chamber of nineteenth-century culture. Benjamin's heuristic, epistemological and hermeneutic methods are rooted in the bodily experience of passage through the city and in the experience of time which it produces. Because of his freedom of movement and of his free relation to time, the *flâneur* can read the city against the grain of modern acceleration. As Chambers rightly points out in *Loiterature*, 'certain modes of reading – I'll call them "critical" reading – require time and are incompatible with haste. The speed reader doesn't have time for reflection and is inclined to take things at face value.'[142]

The word 'passage' forms a constellation of meanings which is at the core of Benjamin's *Passagenwerk*. It encapsulates the idea of connection and establishes links between walking, time perception and urban architecture. For Benjamin, the *flâneur* is a *passeur* in that he is a passer-by who passes his time walking at his own pace through the passages of Paris. This signals an openness to the idea of wasting time, a rejection of urban 'business.' As Chambers points out, his 'peripheral position makes possible a critical function that society's more respected members (its workers, tradespeople, *commerçants*, managers, entrepreneurs, and official intellectuals) are much too *busy* – or insufficiently loiterly – to notice.'[143] A swift pace leads to a flattening of the city-as-text, but by taking his time and loitering, the *flâneur* has time to observe the city around him but also to receive traces of the past. He thus becomes a *passeur* in the other sense of the word, someone who can establish connections between past and present:

> Le passeur de temps évoque ces deux significations: il s'ouvre au temps sans essayer de le maîtriser, il est disponible pour faire passer, pour ménager un passage d'un temps à un autre en se laissant solliciter par les traces – trace du passé dans la ville, traces écrites des livres. Il est un témoin, observateur passif, mais sans lequel le temps ne serait pas. En tant qu'il est à la fois passif et actif, le passeur est aussi celui par qui quelque chose passe, lui-même 'lieu' du passage. Il

[142] Chambers, *Loiterature*, 215.
[143] Chambers, *Loiterature*, 222.

> est enfin l'impossible contemporain de lui-même ou de son temps, habitant une époque où chacun fait l'expérience aiguë du passage.[144]

As Agacinski explains, the *flâneur*, by walking, experiences time present and time past in a unique way. We usually move from experience to knowledge, in that what we perceive transforms into knowledge in the kind of experience known as *Erfahrung*.[145] However, by walking through the streets of Paris (and more especially through the nineteenth-century *passages*) the *flâneur* can both *experience* and learn to *know* the nineteenth century in a more profound way:

> Ce passant qui déambule dans les rues, dans les passages, mais aussi dans les pages des textes qu'il lit, ne se soucie pas d'élaborer un savoir: il s'expose à vivre des expériences, il est en quête d'une expérience vécue, celle qui se nomme *Erlebnis*. Cette expérience-là est celle qui nous touche, nous éprouve et nous traverse. Elle est recherchée pour elle-même et non comme simple moyen de savoir. Comme le savoir peut se nourrir de l'expérience, l'expérience peut se nourrir du savoir. Paris plonge le promeneur dans une ivresse 'anamnestique' qui ne trouve pas seulement son aliment dans ce qu'il rencontre sur son chemin et qui est 'perceptible à la vue,' mais qui s'empare aussi des connaissances inertes et les mue en quelque chose de vécu, c'est-à-dire en 'expérience.' [146]

By experiencing the city with his body, the *flâneur* can apprehend and comprehend its past and present in a much more direct way. Moreover, his movements also stir his knowledge of the city into life and make it meaningful by turning it into experience. Benjamin gives an example of this process in the opening fragment of the *flâneur* section of the *Passagenwerk*:

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[144] Agacinski, *Le Passeur de temps*, 57. 'The *passeur de temps* evokes these two meanings: he opens himself up to time without trying to control it, he is available to transmit or to open a passage between different times by letting traces of the past take hold of him – be it the traces of the past in the city or written traces in books. He is a witness, a passive observer, but without whom time would not *be*. Because he is both active and passive, the *passeur* is also the medium through which something passes, he is himself a 'place' of passage. He is also the impossible 'contemporary' of himself and his own time, living in an age in which each of us experiences and is acutely aware of passage.'

[145] Agacinski, *Le Passeur de temps*, 59.

[146] Agacinski, *Le Passeur de temps*, 59. 'This passer-by meandering through the streets, passages, but also through the pages of the texts he reads, does not want to accumulate knowledge: he exposes himself to living experiences, he is in search of actual experience, which is called *Erlebnis*. This sort of experience is the kind of experience which touches, moves and marks us. We seek it for itself and not as a means to know things. Just as knowledge can feeds itself on experience, experience can feed itself on knowledge. Paris plunges the *flâneur* in a sort of anamnestic intoxication which does not only find resources in what it finds on its way and in what is perceptible through the gaze, it also takes hold of the knowledge which lies dormant in the *flâneur* and stirs it into life, that is, transforms it into experience.'

> But the great reminiscences, the historical shudder – these are a trumpery which he (the *flâneur*) leaves to tourists, who think thereby to gain access to the genius loci with a military password. Our friend may well keep silent. At the approach of his footsteps, the place has roused; speechlessly, mindlessly, its mere intimate nearness gives him hints and instructions. He stands before Notre Dame de Lorette, and his soles remember: here is the spot where in the former times the *cheval de renfort* – the spare horse – was harnessed to the omnibus that climbed the Rue des Martyrs toward Montmartre. Often, he would have given all he knows about the domicile of Balzac or of Gavarni, about the site of a surprise attack or even of a barricade, to be able to catch the scent of a threshold or to recognize a paving stone by touch, like any watchdog (AP [M1, 1], 416).

Knowledge which has not been experienced is seen as no more than trumpery, empty rhetoric meant for tourists, and the *flâneur* would give up all of his knowledge for one true moment of *Erlebnis*.[147] This moment comes to the *flâneur* through walking, when the physical effort he has to make to walk up the steep slope of the Rue des Martyrs reminds him that in the previous century, there was a spare horse to help draw omnibuses up this very street. His body stirs his knowledge of the past into life and conversely, his knowledge of the past makes him more aware of the intensity of the effort he has to provide to ascend the street, and thus sends him back to his own experience of passage through time and space. For the Parisian *flâneur*, echoes of the past resonate in the present while the 'now' of the city provides an opening towards the past. However, what is crucial here is that walking – the lived experience – is what sets the anamnestic process into motion: 'The street conducts the *flâneur* into a vanished time. For him, every street is precipitous. It leads downward – if not to the mythical Mothers, then into a past that can be all the more spellbinding because it is not his own, not private' (AP [M1, 1], 416). In this case, the past the *flâneur* is led to experience does not have to do with personal experience or memories, it is a past that is radically distinct and separate from him, but *flânerie* is envisaged as a willingness to invite the past into the present.[148] Similarly, as he walked through the decaying nineteenth-century arcades in the 1930's, Benjamin could imagine the former splendor of the gas-lit, glass-roofed, marble-paneled arcades lined with elegant shops and stocked with a profusion of commodities. Through this *Erlebnis*, he perceived both the faith in economic progress which underlay the architecture of these

[147] See Agacinski, *Le Passeur de temps*, 59.
[148] AP [D3, 4], 107. 'Rather than pass the time, one must invite it in.'

nineteenth-century *passages* and their obsolescence, and was thus able to *experience* the transience of modernity and experience the passage of time. In a way, the *flâneur* – or *passeur* – does not only witness time passing by, time passes *through* him, or, as Agacinski puts it, 'time happens to him.'[149]

Thus, the *flâneur*'s receptiveness to other times and temporalities proves to be a useful critical tool. It provides him with a useful standpoint from which he can offer a critique of the present, as Chambers points out:

> The present is a context oblivious of the fact that it has a past that can't be quite forgotten and a future that impinges relentlessly on it. […] To be dilatory is to defer the future. […] To be belated is to live in the present, but out of phase with it. […] Either way, a sense of time is asserted against the reification of the present, the correlative construction of history as a series of discrete moments (or periods, or eras), and the linear narrative presupposed by ideologies of both progress and decline.[150]

The *flâneur*'s out-of-stepness with the time of the city thus provides Benjamin with a model of critical insight. It is most obvious in Baudelaire's *Le Cygne*, which Benjamin commented upon extensively. In the poem, the *flâneur* walks through modern Paris but remains psychologically in a remembered past. Benjamin also finds instances of this flâneurial state of out-of-jointness in London literature, as the earlier-cited Chesterton passage about Dickens shows (AP [M11, 1-3], 438). These examples clearly show that the *flâneur*'s state of belatedness gives him a critical viewpoint from which he can perceive the transience of the city, and this is very much the stance which Benjamin adopts for the writing of the *Arcades Project*. According to Agamben, 'those who coincide too well with the epoch, those who are perfectly tied to it in every respect, are not contemporaries, precisely because they do not manage to see it; they are not able to firmly hold their gaze on it.'[151] *Flânerie* can provide a method for the critic precisely because of its untimeliness, and this, for Agamben, defines contemporariness:

[149] Agacinski, *Le Passeur de temps*, 59. 'Qu'arrive-t-il au flâneur parisien? Précisément: le temps. Il ne fait pas seulement l'expérience d'un présent, mais aussi celle d'un passé.' 'What happens to the Parisian *flâneur*? Time is what happens to him. Not only does he experience the present, he also experiences the past.'
[150] Chambers, *Loiterature*, 16.
[151] Agamben, 'What is the contemporary?' 11.

> Those who are truly contemporary, who truly belong to their time, are those who neither perfectly coincide with it nor adjust themselves to its demands. They are thus in this sense irrelevant. But precisely because of this condition, precisely through this disconnection and this anachronism, they are more capable than others of perceiving and grasping their own time.[152]

The *flâneur*'s 'own claim for 'relevance', his 'contemporariness' with respect to his present, is in a disconnection and out-of-jointness.'[153] If Benjamin's heuristic method is still very much relevant to today's critical practice, it may precisely be because of the critical, diachronic standpoint it offers.

Finally, the *flâneur*'s distinctive relation to time raises one last question. From the moment one context opens to another – in Benjamin's case, when the present opens to the past – the temptation is that of 'an orgy of comprehensiveness.'[154] The unfinished *Arcades Project* seems to have been aiming for a totality that could only have been subjected to frustrating limits. For Blanchot, writing inevitably fails to become the comprehensive *œuvre* envisaged by its author,[155] and always ends up becoming a mere *livre* instead. Blanchot's name for this absence of an *œuvre* is *désœuvrement*, which means being at loose end, hanging around – literally 'worklessness.'[156] Interestingly, *désœuvrement* designates very accurately the activity of the *flâneur* (or lack thereof). But it is precisely this *désœuvrement* which produces the *livre des passages*, a dilatory work which flaunts the montage of fragments – or passages – as its directing principle. For Benjamin, one must 'carry over the principle of montage into history. That is, to assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components. Indeed, to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event' (AP [N2, 6], 461). *Désœuvrement* is thus Benjamin's preferred method of writing the comprehensive *œuvre* about nineteenth-century history he dreamt of. The *livre des passages* or book of fragments which emerged out of this

[152] Agamben, 'What is the contemporary?'11.
[153] Agamben, 'What is the contemporary?' 11.
[154] Chambers, *Loiterature*, 13.
[155] Maurice Blanchot, *L'Espace littéraire* [1955] (Paris: Gallimard, 1988), 348. 'Ce qui hante est l'inaccessible dont on ne peut se défaire, ce qu'on ne trouve pas et qui, à cause de cela, ne se laisse pas éviter. L'insaisissable est ce à quoi l'on n'échappe pas.' 'What haunts is the inaccessible which one cannot rid oneself of, what one does not find, and what, because of that, does not allow one to escape it. The ungraspable is what does not escape.' (*The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), 84.)
[156] Chambers also likens his concept of *loiterature* to Blanchot's concept of *désœuvrement* (Chambers, *Loiterature*, 13-14.)

désœuvrement is perhaps as close a result to the *œuvre* as may be achieved, since its form hints at the dream of omniscience which it contains. This *désœuvrement* may also simultaneously contain a critique of systematic, methodical and comprehensive modes of research, and may suggest that shifts of perspective are crucial hermeneutic tools. Benjamin's critical practice was thus rooted in the bodily experience of walking, which provided him with a critical lens through which to look at the city.

The *flâneur*'s way of seeing is not that of a camera eye or of an eye impaled on a stake, it is a fleshly experience embodied in a passing self which is not isolated but linked with other gazing machines or desiring machines. The self is the result of – and lives through – the coming into collision of the bodily sense with new experience, new events, new places, new Others, which creates a constant series of relationships with the world and allows each being to *be* in the world. The *flâneur*'s mode of being may be seen as a being-in-the-world in Heidegger's sense, one in which subject, object, consciousness and the world are all interrelated. His gaze has to do with numberless relationships (with smell, touch, sensation, experience of time, topography, coming into relation), which is what allows subjectivity, the sense of being subject. His way of apprehending the city, which is rooted in the body, gives him a different outlook on urban experience. *Flânerie* thus goes hand in hand with a shift of perspective which endows the *flâneur* with a critical gaze, and provides the critic with a model of heuristic exploration. We find different versions of the *flâneur* on either side of the Channel, but they are all working with the same proposition that *flânerie* is an experience of embodiment which works within Crary's economy of absorption and distraction and fosters critical thinking.

By reinscribing the body of the *flâneur* within the city space, this chapter has reminded us that it is a space of collision. The *flâneur* needs to cross the path of others, to be among the crowd, that teeming mass of bodies and ideas, to exist and persist. *Flânerie* is not only about a distanced, solitary onlooker gazing at the urban life around him, it is also about passing bodies, chance meetings and missed encounters – bodies drawing close one moment and moving apart the next. *Flânerie* opens a space of complex relations and potentially infinite connections, which the next chapter will attempt to decipher.

Chapter 5. '*Du croisement de leurs innombrables rapports*:'[1] Baudelaire in De Quincey and Poe

In chapter 1, I showed how the back and forth movements between Paris and London informed the construction of the *flâneur* and demonstrated that the term has always been a fluid concept. His Protean nature means that he is a figure who can export himself very easily, and the fact that he travels fuels this polymorphism. In other words, he changes and is constantly being constructed and reconstructed through exchanges. This case study will examine the makeup of the urban walker in detail by focusing on three authors, and show how the movement from London to Paris was fundamental in making the Baudelairean *flâneur*. The earliest piece I will focus on is Thomas De Quincey's 1821 autobiography, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, which is a powerful and intimate account of the wanderings of the young Thomas De Quincey through the streets of London. The protagonist is a stroller, a spectator whose gaze is, in places, reminiscent of the Romantic peripatetic poets, who De Quincey deeply admired, and for whom walking was at the core of writing. Elder writes that 'Wordsworth's understandings of history, of poetry, and finally of the integrity of his own life may all be related to […] depictions of himself walking,'[2] and De Quincey imported this peripatetic mode of being into the urban context. I will also dwell on Poe's 1840 short story 'The Man of the Crowd,' which has since become one of the most emblematic pieces of writing about the experience of the city. I will examine the complex interactions between these texts and Baudelaire's poetry.

It is important to dwell on Baudelaire because the *flâneur* he sketched in *Les Fleurs du mal*, *Le Spleen de Paris* and 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne' has become central to our understanding of this figure. The Baudelairean shift has often been stressed because it marks the period when the *flâneur* started to emerge as a symbol of alienation and disconnection, central to the modernist discourse. An important shift certainly takes place, but it's only one amongst many. The figure results from a number of textual exchanges and is in fact

[1] Charles Baudelaire, 'Préface', *Le Spleen de Paris*, in Claude Pichois (ed.), *Charles Baudelaire, Œuvres Complètes* (OC), 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Collection 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade', 1975), vol. 1, 275. 'Of the criss-cross of their innumerable interrelations.' (My translation)
[2] John Elder, *Imagining the Earth: Poetry and the Vision of Nature* (Oxford: OUP, 1985), 94.

emblematic of the way the concept evolved since it was coined. In this chapter, I will track down the movements of the *flâneur* between these texts and cities in detail. As we will see, it is more a question of complex interactions than a simple shift. I shall examine the *flâneur*'s make-up through the kaleidoscopic lens of the term *croisement*, which is at the root of Baudelaire's aesthetics.

I. *Croisement* as a theoretical concept

In the preface to *Le Spleen de Paris*, Baudelaire famously writes:

> Quel est celui de nous qui n'a pas, dans ses jours d'ambition, rêvé le miracle d'une prose poétique, musicale sans rythme et sans rime, assez souple et assez heurtée pour s'adapter aux mouvements lyriques de l'âme, aux ondulations de la rêverie, aux soubresauts de la conscience? C'est surtout de la fréquentation des villes énormes, c'est du croisement de leurs innombrables rapports que naît cet idéal obsédant.[3]

Baudelaire addresses the reader and declares that his poetry – his longing for an ideal prose – finds its roots in *croisement* – in 'the criss-cross of the innumerable interrelations' which the city is made of. From this sentence, we may infer that for the poet, the urban crowd is the site where all this crisscrossing – between people, ideas, thoughts – takes place. However, the expression 'du croisement de leurs innombrables rapport' may be read differently. The ambivalence of this line becomes clear when one looks at the varied ways in which it has been translated. Martin Sorrell speaks of 'the endless meeting of their ways,'[4] Keith Waldrop of 'the criss-cross of their innumerable ways,'[5] and Louise Varese of 'the medley of their

[3] Baudelaire, 'Préface', *Le Spleen de Paris*, vol. 1, 275. 'Which one of us, in his moments of ambition, has not dreamed of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical, without rhythm and without rhyme, supple enough and rugged enough to adapt itself to the lyrical impulses of the soul, the undulations of reverie, the jibes of conscience? It was, above all, out of my exploration of huge cities, out of the medley of their innumerable interrelations, that this haunting ideal was born.' (*Paris Spleen*, trans. Louise Varese (New York: New Directions, 1970), ix.)

[4] Baudelaire, 'Préface', *Le Spleen de Paris*, vol. 1, 275. 'It is above all in the habit of huge cities, the endless meeting of their ways, that this obsessive ideal originates.' (*Paris Spleen*, trans. Martin Sorrell (London: Oneworld Classics, 2010), 3.)

[5] Baudelaire, 'Préface', *Le Spleen de Paris*, vol. 1, 275. 'Above all, it's from being in crowded towns, from the criss-cross of their innumerable ways, that this obsessive ideal is born.' (*Paris Spleen*, trans. Keith Waldrop (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 2009), 3.

innumerable interrelations.'[6] Translators hesitate between different definitions of the word *rapports*, which may refer to 'links,' 'interrelations,' 'ways,' or 'messages.' Interestingly, these definitions of the word *rapport* are also contained in the word *croisement*. The mirroring effect between these two words reinforces the idea that the city – and Baudelaire's poetry – is a place of infinite connections.

However, the word is highly polysemous and has far wider implications than the word *rapport* suggests. Antoine Compagnon has highlighted the ambivalence of the word *croisement* in this expression.[7] If the word *rapports* is the subject of the word *croisement*, then, what is implied is that Baudelaire's poetry originates in the innumerable relations which constantly criss-cross at the heart of the city. However, Compagnon remarks that if we accept this interpretation, the expression sounds somewhat pleonastic. He suggests instead that Baudelaire uses the noun *croisement* in a radically new way, to refer to one of the meanings of the verb *croiser*, which designates the action of crossing the path of others and going in different directions.[8] In this case, it is the poet who performs this action. The expression then implies that the poet explores the city in order to come across these *rapports*, and that he must wander the city streets because his poetry is born out of this movement of crossing the path of others. It is also interesting to note that the term *rapports* has a sexual meaning in French and that Baudelaire's *croisements* are always erotically charged – the boulevard is a place of chance sexual encounter, as can be seen in 'À une passante' for instance. This interpretation conveys the idea that poetry emerges out of the experience of *flânerie*. Indeed, *flânerie* finds its roots in the experience of *croisement* – of street crossing and crossing the path of others. Baudelaire thus uses a pre-existing word and endows it with new meaning to define the

[6] Baudelaire, 'Préface', *Le Spleen de Paris*, vol. 1, 275. 'It was, above all, out of my exploration of huge cities, out of the medley of their innumerable interrelations, that this haunting ideal was born.' (*Paris Spleen*, trans. Louise Varese, ix.)

[7] Antoine Compagnon, 'Baudelaire, moderne et antimoderne', 28/02/2012. <http://www.college-de-france.fr/site/antoine-compagnon/course-2012-04-03-16h30.htm#|q=../antoine-compagnon/course-2011-2012.htm|p=../antoine-compagnon/course-2012-02-28-16h30.htm|> [accessed 03/04/2012]

[8] 'Il n'y a donc pas d'emploi du substantif croisement comme l'utilise Baudelaire, au sens du verbe croiser qui est le 11ème sens dans le Littré, "aller dans une direction différente ou opposée. Nous nous croisâmes en route." C'est donc le seul sens de croisement avec un sujet animé, c'est un sens pronominal qui concerne des personnes, mais il n'y a pas là d'emploi du substantif correspondant à ce 11ème sens du verbe croiser. […] L'expression de Baudelaire met donc à l'épreuve un certain sentiment de la langue et en vérité je ne trouve aucun autre cas, au dix-neuvième siècle, de croisement employé dans le contexte dans lequel Baudelaire l'utilise, c'est-à-dire pour désigner l'action par laquelle un être animé croise ou rencontre autre chose, sans parler de rapports entre des choses, puisque ce sont des rapports qu'il croise, des rapports entre des choses, des rapports entre des êtres, des rapports entre des êtres et des choses. On ne trouve pas d'autres emplois de ce mot à la manière de Baudelaire au dix-neuvième. Cette utilisation du mot croisement est remarquable.' (Compagnon, 'Baudelaire, moderne et antimoderne', 28/02/2012.)

relation between the modern city and his writing. Moreover, a few lines before, he also defines his writing as a 'combination' – or *croisement* – between the old and the new:

> C'est en feuilletant, pour la vingtième fois au moins, le fameux Gaspard de la Nuit, d'Aloysius Bertrand (un livre connu de vous, de moi et de quelques-uns de nos amis, n'a-t-il pas tous les droits à être appelé fameux ?) que l'idée m'est venue de tenter quelque chose d'analogue, et d'appliquer à la description de la vie moderne, ou plutôt d'une vie moderne et plus abstraite, le procédé qu'il avait appliqué à la peinture de la vie ancienne, si étrangement pittoresque.[9]

Just before 're-coining' the word *croisement*, Baudelaire hints at the fact that his own 'original' writing is indebted to earlier texts, thereby conjuring up the notion of intertextuality, which is another form of *croisement*. The word thus seems to condense several meanings in Baudelaire's preface to *Le Spleen de Paris*. It is a spatial term which provides a way of talking about the occupation of space. It is also a social term which provides ways to talk about relationships and connections, or lack thereof. Finally, it is a textual term which may refer to the workings of intertextuality. This combination of spatial, social and textual connotations makes it relevant to the *flâneur*. I suggest that this word provides us with a new lens through which to examine the trope of urban exploration. We can use the polysemy of the French word *croisement* to unpick the complex structure of the *flâneur* who is a crosser and whose work is one of a *croisement* already at work in texts which precede Baudelaire's use of the word. De Quincey and Poe must be read after reading Baudelaire to fully capture this relationship. There are precedents of *croisements* in De Quincey's and Poe's texts, but at the time they write, there is no word for it yet. These *croisements* cross the Channel through Baudelaire, who is making hybrid transfers. In other words, the aesthetics of *croisement* which underlies De Quincey's and Poe's texts of *flânerie* surfaces belatedly in Baudelaire's writing. This multi-faceted word will help us to analyse the trope of urban exploration in terms of topology, movement, genre, intertextuality and intermediality.

Since the story of the *flâneur* begins at street-level, it seems appropriate to start this chapter by examining the implications of the word *croisement* in terms of geography and

[9] Baudelaire, *Le Spleen de Paris*, vol. 1, 275. 'Leafing through Aloysius Bertrand's famous *Gaspard de la nuit* for at least the twentieth time (when a book is known to you, me and a few of our friends, doesn't that make it famous?), the idea came to me to try something analogous, and to apply to the description of modern life, or rather a modern and more abstract life, the process he applied to his portrait of an earlier age, curiously picturesque.' (*Paris Spleen*, trans. Martin Sorrell, 3).

movement through space. It is first and foremost a geographical term which designates an intersection between two streets, tracks, ways or lines. The city, in this light, appears as the locus of *croisement par excellence*: on a geographical level, it is an immense maze composed of multiple crossings. This criss-crossing urban topography engenders another form of *croisement* since the city is also a space where things, people or ideas circulate and inevitably intersect – it is a series of meeting places. A *croisement* evokes the idea of two people or elements coming together by chance taking the form of unexpected events, collisions or sudden encounters, which are precisely the sort of incidents which characterize the experience of *flânerie*. However, in the midst of urban crowds which form inextricable knots of human beings, it is all too easy to let people go unnoticed. The word *croisement* also designates the action of 'passing (each other) in opposite directions'[10] which implies the idea of a missed connection – of separation and dissociation. A *croisement*, at its heart, is also a lapse in space and time, a hiatus, an absence which runs counter to or undoes the systems and plans which try to organise the city in a rational way. Thus, urban geography generates physical *croisements* between people, which are perceived as deeply ambivalent: on the one hand, urban multiplicity is the locus for encounters and on the other hand, they engender alienation at the heart of the multitude for the *flâneur*. A *croisement* can be an alienating non-connection, a missed encounter or even a moment of aporia.

To perform a *croisement* is also 'to lay (a thing) across or athwart another, to set (things) across each other; to place crosswise.'[11] It is the most basic gesture used in weaving – it is making a knot, entwining, intertwining, braiding, bringing together and thus complicating, constructing, composing and creating. This definition contrasts with the previous definitions because the image of weaving implies precisely not rushing; it is a careful manoeuvre, an operation, a craft. This understanding of *croisement* as weaving is particularly useful since writing has been defined as the craft of weaving the threads of different texts together. *Croisement* is thus also a useful textual concept. Etymologically, the word text stems from *textere* (to weave), as Roland Barthes has pointed out: 'L'analyse textuelle demande en effet de se représenter le texte comme un tissu (c'est d'ailleurs le sens étymologique), comme une tresse de voix différentes, de codes multiples, à la fois entrelacés

[10] 'cross, *v.*' OED.
[11] 'cross, *v.*' OED.

et inachevés.'[12] Barthes's theory of text as texture whose meaning is woven by the work of the reader stems from this metaphor of text as *tissu* (woven fabric). The word *croisement* thus brings to mind the notion of intertextuality, which sees texts as sites of *croisement* bringing together different influences and modes of meaning. Julia Kristeva's definition of intertextuality conjures up the image of intricate *croisements*. According to her, authors do not produce texts which are *creatio ex nihilo*, but they compile pre-existent texts to compose their own. Thus, the text becomes 'a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text,' in which 'several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another.'[13] Each text draws on the thread of previous works and thus creates a new pattern:

> Le texte redistribue la langue (il est le champ de cette redistribution). L'une des voies de cette déconstruction-reconstruction est de permuter des textes, des lambeaux de textes qui ont existé ou existent autour du texte considéré, et finalement en lui: tout texte est un intertexte; d'autres textes sont présents en lui, à des niveaux variables, sous des formes plus ou moins reconnaissables: les textes de la culture antérieure et ceux de la culture environnante; tout texte est un tissu nouveau de citations révolues. […] Ces principaux concepts, qui sont les articulations de la théorie, concordent tous, en somme, avec l'image suggérée par l'étymologie même du mot 'texte:' c'est un tissu.[14]

This passage shows how each text is a patchwork weaving other texts together, a reconfiguration from which new meaning can emerge. Every text is thus a rereading and a reconfiguration of other texts. Cécile Hanania has aptly noted that Barthes started reading fabric as text in *Système de la mode* before reading texts as fabric.[15] I hope to use the image of

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[12] Roland Barthes, *L'Aventure sémiologique* (Paris: Seuil, 1985), 358. 'Textual analysis actually needs to represent the text as *tissue* (moreover this is its etymological meaning), as a braid of different voices, of many codes, at once interlaced and incomplete.' (*The Semiotic Challenge*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994, 292).

[13] Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* [1970], ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. T. Gora (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 36.

[14] Roland Barthes, 'Théorie du texte', *Encyclopedia Universalis*, 1973. 'The text redistributes language (it is the field of this redistribution). One of the paths of this deconstruction-reconstruction is to permute texts, scraps of texts that have existed or exist around and finally within the text being considered: any text is an intertext: other texts are present in it, at varying levels, in more or less recognizable forms: the texts of the previous and surrounding culture. Any text is a new tissue of past citations. […]These principal concepts, which are the articulations of the theory, are all concordant, on the whole, with the image suggested by the very etymology of the word 'text': it is a tissue, something woven.' ('Theory of the Text' (1973) in Robert Young (ed.), *Untying the Text* (Boston, London and Henley, Routledge & Kegan Paul,1981), 39.)

[15] Cécile Hanania, *Roland Barthes et l'étymologie* (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2010), 217. 'Le mot "texte," dans l'acception courante, a perdu son sens de "tissu," et, en posant l'équivalence "texte / tissu," Barthes ne fait que revenir à une acception concrète ancienne et remettre à jour un processus métaphorique. Notons, en outre, qu'avant que le texte ne se change en tissu chez Barthes, c'est tout d'abord le tissu qui est lu comme texte.

croisement as a heuristic device in a similar way to better understand how these texts function. Let us see how this model works in Baudelaire's above-mentioned quote from *Le Spleen de Paris*. Compagnon explains that Baudelaire's use of the word *énorme* is a translation of Aeschylus's use of the Greek *anèrithmon* which he finds in De Quincey's *Suspiria de profundis*:

> Baudelaire a choisi de traduire *anèrithmon* par énorme, et non par innombrable, ce qui ne l'empêche pas de penser ensemble les trois qualificatifs, énorme, immense, innombrable, au sens de qui est hors de toute mesure, qui sort du nombre, de la proportion, qui excède le rythme.[16]

The displacement and translation of significant words from one text to another gives Baudelaire's text more depth and significance, and conversely, updates and revives these previous texts. Baudelaire weaves the threads of these different texts together dialogically. As this example displays, poetry is influenced and enriched by its encounters with other texts. The poet/*flâneur* is thus also a craftsman and a translator.

Crossing is also 'the action of drawing lines across; striking out, erasure; writing across other writing,'[17] which could be another definition for palimpsestic writing, which is also related to intertextuality. De Quincey tells us that a palimpsest is 'a membrane roll cleansed of its manuscript by reiterated successions. […] The monkish chemist […] expelled the writing sufficiently to leave a field for the new manuscript, and yet not sufficiently to make the traces of the elder manuscript irrecoverable for us.'[18] The word *croisement* thus draws attention to the idea that the aesthetics of *flânerie* might function like a palimpsest: it intersects with the texts which came before, draws on them and yet simultaneously overshadows them. This summons T.S. Eliot's idea that 'The past should be altered by the

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Système de la mode et ses analyses du vêtement écrit […] semble bien constituer les préliminaires de la théorie du texte et l'analyse du vêtement en texte le seuil d'une analyse du texte en vêtement.' 'The term 'text', in the common sense of the word, has lost its meaning of 'fabric'. By equating text and fabric, Barthes is only coming back to a former concrete meaning of the word and throwing a new light on a metaphorical process. Moreover, let us not forget that before the text transformed into fabric in Barthes's writing, he first read fabric as text. The Fashion System and its analysis of descriptions of women's clothing […] seems to pave the way for his theory of text, while his analysis of clothing as text seems to be a threshold which leads him to analyse text as clothing.'

[16] Antoine Compagnon, 'Baudelaire, moderne et antimoderne', 28/02/2012. 'Baudelaire chose to translate the word *anèrithmon* with the word enormous, and not with the word innumerable, which doesn't stop him from think the three adjectives enormous, immense, and innumerable as equivalent, they designate something immeasurable, incalculable, unbounded, beyond rhythm.'

[17] 'cross, *v.*' OED.

[18] *Suspiria*, in C, 139.

present as much as the present is directed by the past,'[19] which encapsulates the principles of dialogism developed by Mikhail Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination*.[20] A dialogic work is in a continual dialogue with other texts and authors. Like a palimpsest, it answers, corrects, silences, and extends previous texts, but it also revives and is revived by a multiplicity of other texts. A palimpsest is a site of infinite *croisements* which alters our perception of previous works just as much as previous works alter our perception of present works. Similarly, in music, a *croisement* is the 'overlap of different voices in harmony.'[21] Yet, it is also 'bringing opposite things or ideas together, mixing them up,'[22] and 'a thwarting, opposing or contravening'[23] which summons the idea of disharmony. The word thus carries within it an interesting tension between harmony and dissonance. These definitions, with their associations with sketching and music, evoke the notion of intermediality. Baudelaire's *flâneur* or 'painter of modern life' also borrows from art, and I will look at how visual representations of the city helped shape Baudelaire's theory of *flânerie*.

The word *croisement* has other far-reaching implications. In linguistics, it designates 'the influence which two words have upon each other and which results in the creation of a new one.'[24] The word *croisement* has been used to designate an intermixture, it is an instance of cross-fertilization and hybridization.[25] The idea of hybridization and birth is already present in Baudelaire's expression, as Antoine Compagnon has pointed out: 'Le verbe naître figure aussi dans cette phrase: cela remotiverait le sens du croisement de l'accouplement, qui donne quelque chose d'énorme.'[26] According to the *Dictionnaire de l'académie française*, the word *croisement* was primarily used to designate hybridization in Baudelaire's time: 'Action par laquelle deux choses se croisent; ou le résultat de cette action. […] Croisement signifie particulièrement, particulièrement, surtout en Economie rurale, l'action d'accoupler des

[19] T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the individual Talent' (1921), in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997).
[20] For more on diologism, see Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* [1930s], ed., trans. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1981).
[21] 'croisement: idée en musicologie: chevauchement des voix ou des parties, en harmonie.' TLF.
[22] 'croiser: Faire se rencontrer des choses contraires, panacher.' TLF.
[23] 'cross, *v.*' OED.
[24] 'Action de deux mots agissant l'un sur l'autre par contamination'. TLF.
[25] 'croisement: Mode de reproduction entre deux individus de races différentes (métissage) ou entre deux individus d'espèces ou même de genres différents (hybridisme).' TLF.
[26] Antoine Compagnon, 'Baudelaire, moderne et antimoderne', 28/02/2012. 'The verb "to be born" also appears in this sentence, and reminds us of that the word *croisement* also refers to crossbreeding; it is a form of union which engenders something enormous.'

animaux de même genre mais de races différentes.'[27] What stands out here is the idea that to cross – *croiser* – is to combine and recombine, produce and reproduce, create and recreate. Baudelaire's 'original' *flâneur* is precisely being produced out of all the cross-Channel aesthetic exchanges, the traversings – which take place during that period. Baudelaire's *flâneur* is a *croisement outre-manche*, an ever-renewed creation, or one could say, that he is himself a translation in Benjamin's sense. For Benjamin, 'no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original. For in its afterlife – which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living – the original undergoes a change.'[28]

The *flâneur* is thus both a cross, a hybrid creation, and one who can perform these *croisements*, move across different geographical, symbolic and aesthetic spaces and thresholds. Interestingly, many of the connotations carried within the word seem to be contained in the prefix 'trans' in English, used with the meanings 'across, through, over, to or on the other side of, beyond, outside of, from one place, person, thing, or state to another.'[29] The idea of displacement and change is at the core of *croisement* and perhaps even more obviously so in its English equivalent, 'crossing.' The word thus raises the question of whether the *flâneur* crosses gender, class and race. The idea that he might be transgender, that he might 'not conform unambiguously to conventional notions of male or female gender roles, but combine or move between these,'[30] concurs with the idea of a polymorphous figure. De Quincey's anxious sense of masculinity, readings of 'The Man of the Crowd' contending that Poe's narrator might be cruising in a crowd setting,[31] and Baudelaire's androgynous dandy all seem to suggest that *flânerie* opens up this kind of crossing of gender. The word *croisement* – which can designates both a crossroads, a place where one must decide which path to follow and a brief encounter – also leads us to consider the question of how *flânerie* works in relation to desire and object choice, as Baudelaire's transient encounter with the

[27] *Dictionnaire de l'académie française* (Paris: Firmin-Didot frères, 1835, 6ème édition), 456. 'Croisement: The action by which two things intersect, or the result of that action. The term *croisement* is used particularly in rural economy, when referring to the mating of animals of the same species but of different breeds.'
[28] Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator. An introduction to the translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux parisiens*' [1923], trans. Harry Zohn, 1968, in Lawrence Venuti (ed.) *The Translation Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000), 77.
[29] 'trans. *prefix*.' OED.
[30] 'transgender, *adj, n.*' OED.
[31] See Gustavus T. Stadler, 'Poe and Queer Studies', *Poe Studies* (vol.33, issue 1-2, January/December 2000), 19, and Mark Turner, *Backward Glances, Cruising the Queer Streets of New York and London*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2003), 29.

passante reminds us. The word *croisement* might thus help us see the queerness of the *flâneur*, or the *flâneur*'s queering power. Broadly speaking, queer theory's aim is to explore and contest the categorisation of gender and sexuality. It argues that identities are not fixed and cannot be classified and labeled. 'Queer' is also a conceptual tool for thinking, a model of difference and not of identity.[32] The concept of queerness, to be critically effective, must stay open to the possibility of further changes. In the words of Judith Butler, 'if the term […] is to be a site of collective contestation, the point of departure for a set of historical reflections and futural imaginings, it will have to remain that which is, in the present, never fully owned, but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage.'[33] In the way it evolved, the concept of queerness is strikingly similar to that of *flânerie*. One might say that the *flâneur*, to a certain extent, embodies the historicity of queer, its lasting openness to reconfigurations. The *flâneur*'s queerness and queering power shows that he might provide a model for ever-reconfiguring literary, cultural and critical modes of thought.

Finally, it seems that the word *croisement* is also related to ontology. The image of a *croisement* evokes Deleuze and Guattari's *lignes de fuites*, or lines of flight. A line of flight implies rupture, or a clean break with the self:

> A clean break is something you cannot come back from; that is irretrievable because it makes the past cease to exist. […] In rupture, not only has the matter of the past volatized; the form of what happened, of an imperceptible something that happened in a volatile matter, no longer even exists. One has become imperceptible and clandestine in motionless voyage. Nothing can happen, or can have happened, any longer. Nobody can do anything for or against me any longer. My territories are out of grasp, not because they are imaginary, but the opposite: because I am in the process of drawing them.[34]

One could say that the *flâneur*, through his walking activities, invents new lines of flight – he draws them onto the surface of the city and into his life. He also sometimes projects his sense of self onto the city, or *vice versa*, assimilates or integrates elements of the cityscape, which influence and give shape to his sense of self. It seems that the word *croisement*, in many

[32] Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* ((New York: New York University Press, 1996).
[33] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 228.
[34] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 2 vols. [1972-1980] trans. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), vol. 2, 220.

ways, encapsulates what *flânerie* does. With all its diverse *croisements*, it connects different regimes of signs, and can be said to function like Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome: 'Unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states.'[35] The aesthetics of *flânerie* engenders both connection and detachment, continuity and discontinuity, which is why it has the potential to connect different planes of experience and meaning.

The experience of walking, then, is perhaps one of rhizomic *croisements*. One passage from Benjamin's *One-Way-Street* seems to epitomize the different meanings already evoked:

> Not to find one's way in a city may well be uninteresting and banal. It requires ignorance – nothing more. But to lose oneself in a city – as one loses oneself in a forest – that calls for quite a different schooling. Then, sign-boards and street name, passers-by, roofs, kiosks, or bars must speak to the wanderer like a cracking twig under his feet in the forest, like the startling call of a bittern in the distance, like the sudden stillness of a clearing with a lily standing erect at its centre. Paris taught me this art of straying… The city, as it disclosed itself to me… was a maze not only of paths but of tunnels. I cannot think of the underworld of the Metro and the North-South line opening their hundreds of shafts all over the city, without recalling my endless *flâneries*.[36]

In this poetic description of his Parisian *flâneries*, Benjamin evokes an experience of disconnection – or loss – which goes hand in hand with an equally intense experience of connectedness and even of epiphany. The passage weaves the experience of losing oneself in the city into that of losing one's way in the forest. Moments of dissonance lead to unexpected moments of harmony and ontological fullness, like the discovery of 'the sudden stillness of a clearing with a lily standing erect at its centre.' This has distinctly Eliot-like overtones and seems almost metaphysical. Any sign in the city may lead to a memory, a feeling, a sensation. To Benjamin, the system of Parisian streets is 'a vascular network of imagination' (AP, 901). The city, 'a maze not only of paths but of tunnels,' is perceived as an immense site of *croisements*, both horizontal and vertical, a palimpsest of infinite density. Walking through the city opens up unexpected thresholds in space and time which create passages between past

[35] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 23.
[36] Benjamin, *One-Way-Street*, 8-9.

and present, reason and myth… *Flânerie* creates a rhizomic space by generating non-hierarchical entry and exit points within the city space. This image of the city as an immense rhizome produces an impression of infinite possibility through an aleatory following of paths.

I argue that the multi-layered word *croisement*, with its many definitions, is a heuristic device which can help explore how the city and the experience of *flânerie* are defined, delineated and experienced in De Quincey's, Poe's and Baudelaire's texts. I will start by examining the topography of the cities described in these works, since it is what determines the movements of the *flâneur*. I will dwell on the many geographical *croisements* which make up the city space and generate a powerful sense of disorientation and even aporia and the interruption of meaning. I will then look at the possibility – or lack thereof – of *croisement* ('crossing the path of others') which the city offers. Indeed, these writers all define the crowd as a space of ambivalence, and this tension between the crowd as a negative space and the crowd as a space of encounters, freedom and creation for the *flâneur* will inform the progression of my argument. This will lead me to examine how these *croisements* or *flâneries* all naturally lead to imaginative, metaphorical, and intertextual *croisements* in and between these texts.

II. *Flânerie* or street crossings: maze and amazement in De Quincey's *Confessions*

For the sake of clarity, this section of my argument will mainly focus on the earliest of these texts, the 1821 edition of De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. Since the *flâneur*'s movements are born out of the criss-crossing design of the city, I will start by considering the city as a site of geographical *croisements* – or crossroads and crossings. De Quincey conjures up an urban map made up of innumerable intersections. The intricate layout of thoroughfares, streets, alleys and passages leads the *flâneur* to perform another form of *croisement*: the word encapsulates, as we have seen, both the idea of encountering and missing another. I will thus next analyse how De Quincey's text shows that this experience – of both encounter and loss – informs the structure of the *Confessions*. These geographical and physical *croisements* engender a powerful – yet always ambivalent – feeling of disorientation.

The final part of my analysis will examine how the text's aesthetics of disorientation is generated through the multiplication of these symbolic *croisements.*

1. *Croisements*/crossroads: sites of meaningful encounters

Since the story of the *flâneur* starts at street-level, I will start by mapping De Quincey's movements through London. However, in De Quincey's text, one cannot dissociate the geographical level from the symbolic level. It seems that the two most marking encounters he makes in London both take place at *croisements* – or crossroads. A crossroads is a traditional symbol of choice in literature, it is the point where one decides where to turn one's steps. The word refers to a movement, but interestingly, the action of crossing paradoxically calls for a moment of pause in time and space. It thus signals a powerful ontological dilemma. In Sophocles' *Oedipus*, Oedipus makes the fateful decision to kill his father, Laius, at a place where three roads meet. In De Quincey's *Confessions*, crossroads do not merely serve as topographical indications, they also signal important, life-changing encounters.

Upon his arrival in London, the young De Quincey's knowledge of the city appears to be restricted to Oxford Street. His walks with Ann are confined to the straight and narrow limits of Oxford Street: 'For many weeks I had walked at nights with this poor friendless girl up and down Oxford Street' (C, 21). Ann is inextricably linked to this street throughout the *Confessions*, and her job as a prostitute seems to keep her physically and symbolically attached to it and its neighbourhood. However, the map of London expands and gets more detailed as the narrative progresses. Readers are led to experience the city and all its *croisements* through the *flâneries* of De Quincey, who slowly unrolls the map of London before their eyes. The geography of London seems to extend and become more defined with each meaningful encounter. Ann's touching act of kindness towards De Quincey, for instance, is a moment of pause which takes place at the junction between Oxford Street and Soho Square (C, 22). The location of this event underlines its importance: his friendship with Ann becomes sealed at a *croisement*. Further on, De Quincey gives a most detailed account of his last walk through London in Ann's company.

> I set off, accompanied by Ann, towards Piccadilly; […] Our course lay through a part of the town which has now all disappeared, so that I can no longer retrace its ancient boundaries —Swallow Street, I think it was called. Having time enough before us, however, we bore away to the left until we came into Golden Square; there, near the corner of Sherrard Street, we sat down, not wishing to part in the tumult and blaze of Piccadilly. (C, 26-27)

These precise geographical indications show that they part ways at a *croisement*, which, again, highlights the significance of their last meeting. These examples show that at the beginning of the *Confessions*, the phenomenon enables the urban walker to move from a perception of the city as abstract anonymous space to a perception of the city as 'place.' De Quincey inscribes his own subjective experience onto the city map through his use of *croisement*. For Yi-Fu Tuan, 'what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value.'[37] Moreover, he also perceives place as pause: 'place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.'[38] His definition of place corresponds to the definition of *croisement* outlined at the beginning of the *Confessions*. De Quincey does not merely use *croisement* to outline London's geography, he uses these crossings to sketch his own 'psychogeography'[39] of London.

De Quincey's second determining encounter is his uncanny encounter with the 'sublunary druggist'. It is central to the *Confessions* since it is the druggist who introduces him to the pleasures of opium for the first time. This chance meeting is brought about by another *croisement* – or chance meeting – with a friend: 'By accident, I met a college acquaintance who recommended opium' (C, 11, 12, 33, 37). All these *croisements* seem to characterize the experience of London, which is, as Deborah Epstein Nord points out, 'a place of sudden events, unidentified people, bizarre coincidences, and unexpected intimacies, all of them ultimately without an explanation.'[40] De Quincey's life-changing encounter with the

[37] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1977), 6.
[38] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place*, 6.
[39] I am borrowing the term coined by Guy Debord here. Debord defined psychogeography as 'the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organised or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals.' Guy Debord, 'Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography', *Les Lèvres Nues* (n°6, Bruxelles, Septembre 1955).
[40] Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation and the City* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995), 42.

druggist also takes place at a crossroads: 'Near "the stately Pantheon" (as Mr. Wordsworth has obligingly called it) I saw a druggist's shop' (C, 38). The anastrophe which puts 'the Stately Pantheon' in first position in the sentence gives it prominence. The Stately Pantheon was located at the intersection between Poland Street and Oxford Street. The location of the encounter points to the decisive influence it will have on the course of his life: 'I feel a mystic importance attached to the minutest circumstances connected with the place and the time and the man (if man he was) that first laid open to me the Paradise of Opium-eaters' (C, 38).

Interestingly, the location of this *croisement* conjures up an intertext – another form of *croisement*. The Stately Pantheon, which was a music venue,[41] and which De Quincey mentions four times in the *Confessions*, is also a reference to Wordsworth's poem 'The Power of Music'. One may note that in Wordsworth's poem, the Stately Pantheon is also a meeting place between the musician and his listeners:

AN Orpheus! an Orpheus! yes, Faith may grow bold,
And take to herself all the wonders of old; —
Near the stately Pantheon you'll meet with the same
In the street that from Oxford hath borrowed its name.

His station is there; and he works on the crowd,
He sways them with harmony merry and loud;
He fills with his power all their hearts to the brim —
Was aught ever heard like his fiddle and him?

What an eager assembly! what an empire is this![42]

The opening lines show that music both 'fills the heart' and stops passers-by in their tracks, and thus has the power to take over body and mind. Wordsworth's account of music is deeply ambivalent in his poem. 'On the one hand, its 'power' and 'empire' offer its fascinated hearers temporary relief from their cares. […] On the other hand, it traps people, causing them to neglect their duties. […] It renders them passive and defenseless […] and narrows their vision.'[43] According to Grevel Lindop,[44] De Quincey persistently associates the third verse

[41] F. H. W. Sheppard (ed.), *Survey of London*, vol. 31 and 32: St James Westminster, Part 2, 1963, p. 268. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=41514> [accessed 11/11/2012]
[42] William Wordsworth, 'Power of Music' [1806], v. 3-9, in Stephen Gill (ed.), *William Wordsworth, The Major Works*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 323.
[43] Grevel Lindop, 'De Quincey's "Immortal Druggist" and Wordsworth's "Power of Music."', *Notes & Queries*, vol. 41 issue 3 (September 1994), 341-343, (p.341).

from the poem with the origin and progress of his addiction to draw a parallel between the power of music and that of opium. Wordsworth's blind fiddler 'may be viewed as the purveyor of a drug as fascinating and addictive as opium.'[45] Opium, like music, 'sways [De Quincey] with harmony' but also his 'Spirit in fetters bound[s].'[46] Interestingly, the word *croisement* refers both to the overlap of different voices in harmony and to dissonance. Similarly, opium-taking introduces both 'exquisite order, legislation and harmony' (C, 40) – which the ternary rhythm of the sentence redoubles here – and 'the tread of innumerable armies' (C, 77). This *croisement* with Wordsworth's poem thus reinforces De Quincey's discourse about the seductive yet addictive and dangerous power of opium.

Thus, the crossroads or crossing places which make up the city are not mere geographical indications, they mark important 'places', where meaningful encounters take place. They signal important diegetic shifts and are fraught with intertextual and symbolic references which are so many textual *croisements*.

2. *Croisement* / movement: towards missed connections

However, one should not forget that a crossroads is both a meeting point and a point where paths or streets necessarily diverge. As was said earlier, the word *croisement* does not only evoke the idea of a meeting, it also conjures up that of a missed encounter, a disconnection, or of two people inexorably moving away from each other. De Quincey's two crucial encounters are also important moments in his writing precisely because they are never repeated and imply a sense of irreparable loss.

In De Quincey's description of his missed rendezvous with Ann, he indicates that his meeting is to take place at the crossroads where Great Titchfield Street and Oxford Street meet. The presence of a *croisement*, here again, points to the significance of this moment. However, the moment never occurs. They never cross paths:

> I hoped to return in a week at farthest, and I agreed with her that on the fifth night from that, and every night afterwards, she would wait for me at six o'clock near

[44] Lindop, 341.
[45] Lindop, 341.
[46] Wordsworth, 'Power of Music', v. 39, *The Major Works*, 324.

> the bottom of Great Titchfield Street, which had been our customary haven, as it were, of rendezvous, to prevent our missing each other in the great Mediterranean of Oxford Street. (C, 27)

In this interesting mixing of time and space, London's map paradoxically comes into sharp focus and simultaneously goes out of focus. The precise location of their meeting point suddenly dissolves and disappears into the immensity of 'the great Mediterranean of Oxford Street'. This image illustrates admirably well how a *croisement* contains within it the promise of encounter and the threat of permanent separation. The word thus also seems to epitomize the most marking experience of Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions*, since it evokes both a meeting and a missed encounter. It crystallises the nature of his relation to Ann, which is precisely one of connection and disconnection. A *croisement*, like Wordsworth's 'spot of time', is a dialectical experience. These 'spots of time' are often childhood memories which manifest themselves in visions, dreams or hallucinations. They are defining moments which carry ontological weight, and are the sign of 'something far more deeply interfused.'[47] For Wordsworth, they 'demonstrate the workings of "unknown modes of being" as dreams do.'[48] He defines 'spots of time' in Book XII of *The Prelude* as key moments in the history of his imagination. A 'spot of time' may be described as a *croisement* because it's a moment when past and present experiences intersect:

There are in our existence spots of time,
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence, depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired;
A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
That penetrates, enables us to mount,
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.[49]

[47] Wordsworth, 'Lines written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey,' v. 97, *The Major Works*, 134.
[48] Jonathan Bishop, 'Wordsworth and the "Spots of Time"', *ELH*, vol. 26, no. 1 (Mar., 1959), 45-65, (p. 52).
[49] Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, XII, v. 208-218, *The Major Works*, 565.

De Quincey's *croisement* with Ann, which incessantly haunt his opiated imagination, might be seen as a 'spot of time' in the *Confessions*. His meetings/missed encounters with Ann are early memories which acquire more and more importance as his narrative progresses, and these Ann memories constantly intersect with (*croise*) the narrator's present. One could say that this Ann 'spot of time' is akin to T.S. Eliot 'unattended Moment, the moment in and out of time.'[50] A spot of time can also be a moment of radical disjuncture and a loss of meaning which is followed by full meaning. It is precisely because meaning cannot be found anymore that the poet must reinvest the spot of time (or epiphany) with meaning, as Jean-Marie Fournier has aptly pointed out.

> Ce vide en lieu et place de l'objet épiphanique semble designer le lieu du non-sens, que d'autres appelleraient Réel. […] Le poème s'attache à mettre en lumière le processus de nouage entre ce réel incongru, et les deux ordres du symbolique et de l'imaginaire […]: là, dans ce processus d'accroche, est sans doute le cœur de l'expérience épiphanique.[51]

This *croisement* with Ann is the crux of De Quincey's autobiography – it will dominate his opium dreams throughout the *Confessions* and will indeed be endowed with significance. It is also a powerful experience of loss – loss of the protagonist in the city, loss of Ann, whom he is searching for, loss of meaning. The text continually returns to this original spot of time, precisely because it is an experience of loss. It gives the text a peculiar form of circularity, which makes the experience of reading the *Confessions* close to that of a movement through a labyrinth or rather a maze. These transient *croisements* with Ann connect him to this figure of desire: 'Being myself at that time of necessity a peripatetic, or a walker of the streets, I naturally fell in more frequently with those female peripatetics who are technically called street-walkers' (C, 20-21). In this chiasmatic structure (which is itself a crisscross arrangement[52]), De Quincey interlocks his own experience with that of prostitutes. De Quincey's *croisement* with Ann – which is both an encounter and loss – later becomes emblematic of the experience of the city and is immortalized in Baudelaire's poem 'À une

[50] T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (New York: Mariner Books, 1968), 32.
[51] Jean-Marie Fournier, 'Avatars spectraux de l'épiphanie', in Sara Thornton (ed.), *Circulation and transfer of key scenes in nineteenth-century literature* (Paris: Institut d'études anglophones, Université Paris Diderot, 2011), 78. 'At the centre of epiphany lies emptiness and absence of meaning, a place which others might name the Real… The poem strives to bring to light the binding of this incongruous 'Real' order with the symbolic and imaginary orders. The heart of the epiphanic experience lies precisely in this process of binding between meaninglessness and significance.'
[52] 'chiasmus, *n.*: Etymology: from the Greek χιασμός crossing, diagonal arrangement, especially of clauses of a sentence.' OED.

passante': 'Un éclair... puis la nuit! - Fugitive beauté / Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître, / Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité ?'[53] Baudelaire's choice of tense here (the 'passé composé' of 'a fait') shows how this one-time, fleeting encounter with this mysterious passer-by becomes a lasting, meaningful experience through writing. Benjamin sees this poem as emblematic of the urban experience and writes that 'the delight of the city-dweller is not so much love at first sight as love at last sight. It is a farewell forever which coincides in the poem with the moment of enchantment.'[54] The poem crystallises, slows down and expands on this ephemeral moment of emotion and endows it with meaning, just as De Quincey develops the motif of his *croisement* with Ann throughout the *Confessions*.

Let us now concentrate on the second important encounter of the *Confessions*. Just like with Ann, De Quincey never finds the druggist again. The location of their first and only meeting – a crossroads – conjures up interesting intertextual *croisements* which add to the depth and significance of their encounter. In mythology and folklore, crossroads are also seen as sites which are 'between the worlds' where supernatural encounters may occur, never to be repeated again. De Quincey's meeting with the 'sublunary druggist' is indeed presented in this light:

> When I asked for the tincture of opium, [the druggist] gave it to me as any other man might do, and furthermore, out of my shilling returned me what seemed to be real copper halfpence, taken out of a real wooden drawer. Nevertheless, in spite of such indications of humanity, he has ever since existed in my mind as the beatific vision of an immortal druggist, sent down to earth on a special mission to myself. And it confirms me in this way of considering him, that when I next came up to London I sought him near the stately Pantheon, and found him not; and thus to me, who knew not his name (if indeed he had one), he seemed rather to have vanished from Oxford Street than to have removed in any bodily fashion. The reader may choose to think of him as possibly no more than a sublunary druggist; it may be so, but my faith is better—I believe him to have evanesced, or evaporated. So unwillingly would I connect any mortal remembrances with that

[53] Baudelaire, 'À une Passante', *OC*, vol. 1, 92. 'A lighting-flash — then darkness! Fleeting chance / Whose look was my rebirth — a single glance! / Through endless time shall I not meet with you?' (trans. Campbell, 124.)
[54] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Pimlico, 1999), 166.

> hour, and place, and creature, that first brought me acquainted with the celestial drug. (C, 38)

In this passage, De Quincey takes pleasure in painting the druggist as one of the supernatural spirits which appear at crossroads in legends. All the paraphernalia of folktales is conjured up in this short fairytale. The druggist's 'dull appearance,' the wooden drawer, the real copper halfpence, are all elements testifying to the narrator's good faith, realistic details which prove that he has been there. However, these elements are then contrasted with the druggist's inhuman, insubstantial nature: he does not have a name, and therefore is not seen as substantial, made of flesh and blood, he has mysteriously 'vanished,' or rather 'evanesced or evaporated' from the crossroads, and does not belong to the realm of mortals. De Quincey constantly casts doubt upon his human nature: 'the man (if man he was),' 'in spite of such indications of humanity,' 'The reader may choose to think of him as possibly no more than a sublunary druggist,' 'mortal or otherwise' (C, 38). Moreover, the fact that crossroads often represent spaces of liminality which are 'neither here nor there' or 'betwixt and between' might also gesture proleptically towards the dream-space, between consciousness and the unconscious, which opium-eating will open up. Like in legends, De Quincey's one-time magical encounter turns out to be a decisive, life-changing *croisement*. The added connotation of the fecundity and fertility of the botanical cross-fertilization also illustrates the idea that this *croisement* gives birth to a narrative, to story-telling.

I have attempted to show that the crossroads in De Quincey's text signal fleeting encounters which are determining precisely because they are never to happen again. The word *croisement* thus symbolizes the experience of the city, which is both one of brief encounters and eternal separation. These missed connections reverse the perception of the city as geographical 'place,' transforming the city back into space, which 'allows movement' and is characterized by 'openness, freedom, and threat.'[55]

3. From crossroads to mazes: the pleasure and pain of the labyrinth

From streets crossings to rhizomic wanderings

[55] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place*, 6.

These *croisements* with Ann and the druggist herald a shift on another level: they signal a threshold in the diegesis of the *Confessions*. De Quincey indicates this clearly in the structure of his biography. He concludes his 'Preliminary Confessions' with an account of his desperate search for Ann through the streets of London and opens the following section of his *Confessions*, 'The Pleasures of Opium,' with his encounter with the druggist. These two *croisements* lead to and signal another form of *croisement*: from the moment De Quincey is introduced to the pleasures of opium, the plane of reality and that of the dream start to interpenetrate or 'cross.' Indeed, to perform a *croisement* is also 'to lay (a thing) across or athwart another,' it is entwining and intertwining. De Quincey's opium-induced visions are not only superimposed onto the London map he has sketched for us, they are woven into the canvas of his geography. After a while, it becomes difficult to distinguish between London's 'real' geography and De Quincey's opiated visions, and the experience of walking the city becomes one of disorientation. Through the lens of opium, the crossroads of London change back into the intersections of a bewildering maze. To use Yi-Fu Tuan's distinction, London becomes pure space.

Opium is indeed synonymous with geographical confusion in the *Confessions*. If the 'Preliminary Confessions' apprehend the capital as a describable place made up of *croisements* between recognizable and nameable streets, part II of the *Confessions* transforms London into a puzzling labyrinth made of multitudinous arteries, alleys and dead-ends. This perception of the city is further complicated by the fact that the varied itineraries of the walker create intricate patterns which seem to add to the mysterious quality of the city.

> And sometimes, in my attempts to steer homewards, upon nautical principles, by fixing my eye on the pole-star, and seeking ambitiously for a north-west passage, instead of circumnavigating all the capes and head-lands I had doubled in my outward voyage, I came suddenly upon such knotty problems of alleys, such enigmatical entries, and such sphynx's riddles of streets without thoroughfares, as must, I conceive, baffle the audacity of porters, and confound the intellects of hackney-coachmen. (C, 47)

De Quincey uses the metaphor of navigation to describe the pleasure derived from his peregrinations through the city. This metaphor is also a metatextual reference to the circumvolutions of his own innovative writing on the page. The syntax of that sentence itself, as well as its slow rhythm, may be said to imitate the meanderings of the urban walker so that

the reader follows blindly and instinctively. This sentence seems to be an invitation to lose one's way with De Quincey in the London labyrinth. The reader walks with him and steps as he steps, reads as he writes. Experiencing De Quincey's text is like experiencing the city at street-level, which is an experience of disorientation or near-blindness. De Certeau draws a useful parallel between the activity of drifting through the city and that of the writer:

> Les chemins qui se répondent dans cet entrelacement, poésies insinues dont chaque corps est un élément signé par beaucoup d'autres, échappent à la lisibilité. Tout se passe comme si un aveuglement caractérisait les pratiques organisatrices de la ville habitée. Les réseaux de ces écritures avançantes et croisées composent une histoire multiple, sans auteur ni spectateur, formée en fragments de trajectoires et en altérations d'espaces: par rapport aux représentations, elle reste quotidiennement, indéfiniment, autre.[56]

The labyrinthine structure of the city is mirrored in De Quincey's style, as Fransesca Cuojati has noted:

> At the core of De Quincey's stylistic efforts lies the paradox investigated by J. Hillis Miller: 'a straight line conveys no information beyond the fact that the line is there, like a continuous dial tone on the telephone.' Style, for the Opium-Eater, entails manipulating syntax in order to create the necessary rhythm for the 'impassioned' kind of prose he requires. […] The text of the *Confessions* too, like London, proves then a labyrinth, complete with cross-sentences and abrupt turning points, and must be experienced as such by the reader/wanderer who loses his way in the blind alleys of endless digressions. [57]

De Quincey brings to light the unrecognized poems which wanderers write with their bodies through his writing, which conveys the impression of 'blindness' created by the labyrinthine city. De Quincey's labyrinthine sentence makes the experience of reading the *Confessions* one of disorientation and obfuscation. As Tschumi has pointed out, 'one can participate in and share the fundamentals of the labyrinth, but one's perception is only part of the labyrinth as it

[56] Michel de Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien*, 141-142. 'The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poems in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility. It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness. The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representation, it remains daily and indefinitely other.' (*The Practices of Everyday Life*, 93.)

[57] Francesca Cuojati, 'De Quincey's Opiate London: From Labyrinth to Palimpsest,' in Susan Onega, John A Stotesbury (eds.) *London in Literature: Visionary Mappings of the Metropolis* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, C. Winter, 2003), 39-40.

manifests itself. One can never see it in totality, nor can one express it. One is condemned to it and cannot go outside and see the whole.'[58]

Also contained in this passage is the metaphor of the knot, which is the result of an excess of *croisements*, and which conjures up the image of London as an inextricable tangle of streets. The link between knots and labyrinths is an ancient one, and can for instance be observed in some of Leonardo Da Vinci's *incisioni*, which are labyrinthine graphic representations derived from the knots he designed.[59] The images of the sphynx's riddles and of the enigma both evoke the bewildering quality of the cityscape, with its impossible ways and 'knotty problems of alleys'. This perplexing labyrinth baffles even those whose job it is to find their way about London. Adjectives such as 'Circean,' and 'nautical,' as well as the sphinx metaphor, point to the quasi-mythological aspect of the protagonist's quest in a protean urban environment. 'I could almost have believed, at times, that I must be the first discoverer of some of these *terrae incognitae*, and doubted, whether they had yet been laid down in the modern charts of London' (C, 47-48). No wonder, then, that this peripatetic explorer should find himself in an urban environment which is utterly alien to him, and should harp on 'the perplexities of [his] steps in London' (C, 48).

Before proceeding further, I would like to come back to the distinction between a labyrinth and a maze, which is meaningful in this case. A labyrinth is unicursal – reaching its centre is certain, but experiencing the labyrinth is synonymous with hardship and losing one's sense of orientation and time. If one unravelled it, one would obtain a single thread, hence the aptness of the knot metaphor. The maze, on the other hand, is multicursal. In addition to these difficulties, the maze contains dead-ends and confronts one with the choice between different paths and directions, and escape is less certain. If one rolled it out, one would obtain something shaped like a branch.[60] I would say that as the story progresses, and as the opiated visions of London become more frequent, De Quincey increasingly perceives London as a

[58] Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996), 49.
[59] See Figure 10. After Leonardo da Vinci, *Knot Pattern*, circa 1495, engraving, 29 x 21 cm, The British Museum. Mentioned in Rubén Wengiel, *Europe's Mazes: On Labyrinthine Thought in Architectural Design*, 7. <http://www.ef.huji.ac.il/publications/Vangiel.pdf> [accessed 02/10/2012]
[60] For a more detailed analysis of the differences between labyrinth and maze, see Hermann Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, ed. Robert Ferré and Jeff Saward (Munich: Prestel, 2000), 23.

disorienting space. The different narrative threads running through the *Confessions* become inextricably entangled, and the London labyrinth, with all its crossings, mutates into a maze.

However, one might go even further and argue that De Quincey offers a model of exploration which is akin to an organic maze or a rhizome. De Quincey deliberately chooses to follow a pattern of organic meandering which offers no clear map of what is to come, and he tells the reader clearly what he or she has been experiencing: 'The whole course of this narrative resembles, and was meant to resemble, a caduceus wreathed about with meandering ornaments, or the shaft of a tree's stem hung round and surmounted with some vagrant parasitical plant' (C, 94). De Quincey's words here speak of the marginal and transient ('vagrant'), the flow of water ('course') and the notion of the strange and alien living adjacent to and dependant on the host ('parasite'). All of these indicate a positioning outside of the hegemonic and traditional power structures. The notion of straying from the main purpose is linked in with a form of dissension and dissidence in which ideological choices are mirrored in a marginal aesthetics. This image of a text functioning like an organic maze conjures up the idea of the rhizome as defined by Deleuze and Guattari. A rhizome is originally 'an elongated, usually horizontal, subterranean stem which sends out roots and leafy shoots at intervals along its length.'[61] Deleuze and Guattari use it as an epistemological model that allows for multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points. They oppose it to an arborescent conception of knowledge: 'Unlike the tree, the rhizome is not the object of reproduction: neither external reproduction as image-tree nor internal reproduction as tree-structure. The rhizome is an antigeneaology. It is short term memory, or antimemory. The rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots.'[62] In a similar manner, De Quincey's text offers a model of apprehension of the city and of reading which does not follow a hierarchical structure, or to take up De Certeau's image, the path outlined by the cartographer. De Quincey's text proliferates organically, and the model he proposes functions more like the botanical rhizome, which is made of numerous *croisements*: 'Unlike the graphic arts, drawing or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectible, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight.'[63] His text lets the reader apprehend

[61] 'rhizome, *n.*' OED.
[62] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 23.
[63] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 23.

multiplicities. De Quincey's writing mirrors the shift in the perception of the city, which becomes one of increasingly complicated *croisements*. Another principle which Deleuze and Guattari assign to the rhizome is that of 'asignfying rupture:'[64] 'against the oversignifying breaks separating structures or cutting across a single structure. A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines.'[65] The way the *croisements* evoked by De Quincey (be they physical or geographical) appear, disappear and reappear in the *Confessions* are akin to rhizomic proliferation. Thus, both De Quincey's *flâneurial* perception and its object – the city itself – seem to turn into rhizomes.

The *Confessions* start with a map of London with identifiable crossings, which mutates into a labyrinth and then turns into a maze. This rhizomic city will proliferate exponentially in De Quincey's opiated imagination.

Crossing into the dream world: wandering the opium nightmare

Indeed, this rhizomic perception of the city takes on gigantic proportions under the influence of opium. It seems the protagonist's dreams are a *croisement* between his meanderings through London and his mental rambles and contortions. Walking, it seems, becomes a metaphor for reveries and wandering thought. In part II of the *Confessions*, De Quincey constantly drifts away from the fixed plane of reality. Robert Mighall, in his work entitled *A Geography of Victorian Fiction*, tried to identify the areas of London De Quincey traverses in his autobiography, but could not precisely pinpoint these places.[66] Moreover, De Quincey suspects that the '*terrae incognitae*' he describes have not been laid down 'in the modern charts of London' (C, 48). The experience of walking the city-streets metamorphoses into an inner experience for the protagonist. *Croisements*, or the absence of connection with others, naturally transforms the experience of the city into one of subjectivity and interiority. The London streets become a metaphor for the protagonist's own mind – the '*terrae incognitae*' he dwells upon are a reflection of his own psyche. Opium is what sets the reverie into motion and induces a form of synesthetic wandering – or *croisement* – which makes unexpected connections between De Quincey's own pain, his physical experience of the city, distant places and ancient texts. In the chapter 'The Pains of Opium,' his imaginative rambles

[64] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 12.
[65] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 10.
[66] Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 36.

are not confined to the streets of the capital, but take him to far-away countries, since opium seems to stretch time and space – his mental journeys thus take him successively to India, ancient Egypt, and China: 'I ran into pagodas […] I fled from the wrath of Brama through all the forests of Asia. […] I was buried, for a thousand years, in stone coffins, with mummies and sphinxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of ancient pyramids. […] I found myself in Chinese houses, with cane tables, &c' (C, 74). His mental wanderings thus turn out to be a distorted reflection of his geographical wanderings in the metropolis.

As was said before, the experience of street-crossing necessarily entails another form of *croisement,* which is to cross the path of others. Indeed, through the lens of opium, the protagonist starts perceiving London as a never-ending labyrinth whose crowds form ever-shifting walls which irremediably separates him from his friend Ann, in spite of their spatial proximity. In the following passage, the image of the walking crowd raising walls between the protagonist and his object likens the city to a prison:

> If she lived, doubtless we must have been sometimes in search of each other, at the very same moment, through the mighty labyrinths of London; perhaps, even within a few feet of each other – a barrier no wider in a London street, often amounting in the end to a separation for eternity! (C, 34)

Here, it seems that De Quincey's convoluted prose reproduces the maze-like quality of the city, or his own meandering progress. The walls of De Quincey's are moving, living and breathing entities, which makes it impossible not to lose one's way. The 'many, many myriads of human faces' of London form obstacles between him and Ann (C, 34). Paolo Santarcangeli has pointed out that 'there is no limit to the forms of the labyrinth,'[67] which is part of its mystifying power. The labyrinthine city is increasingly perceived as an inescapable site of confinement. One naturally thinks of the most archetypal of all labyrinths, that of Knossos, which Daedalus originally designed as a prison for the Minotaur. This image of a prison with human walls is all the more terrifying as it creates a space of confinement which combines agoraphobia and claustrophobia.

De Quincey describes the city as an involved web, an uncontrollable and fantastic maze built to trap wanderers inside its dark alleys: 'Just as in Cheapside, if you look right and

[67] Paolo Santarcangeli, *Le Livre des labyrinthes. Histoire d'un mythe et d'un symbole* (1967), trad. Monique Lacau (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), 13.

left, the streets so narrow, that lead off at right angles, seem quarried and blasted out of some Babylonian brick kiln.'[68] This sentence inverses the traditional role of the crossroads. Here, it does not help the wanderer to find his way, but adds to the sense of disorientation and entrapment felt by the protagonist. One of De Quincey's metaphors goes as far as making the immuring bricks, in their turn, prisoners of this confounding labyrinth: 'the streets were [not] quarried out of the bricks, but, on the contrary, (most ridiculous as it seems,) […] the bricks have supervened upon the streets.'[69] The captive walker can only gaze at what lies beyond the maze of the city, through the gaps made by avenues in the grey cityscape: 'my consolation was to gaze from Oxford Street every avenue in succession' (C, 35). The city takes on all the characteristics of a cell, keeping its prisoners under lock and key: 'thou, Oxford-street, stony-hearted step-mother! thou hast [...] echoed to the groans of innumerable hearts' (C, 35). This Gothic, oppressive London is likened to a cold-hearted jailer imprisoning the 'poor friendless child,' the 'poor houseless wanderers,' the '[tearful] children'[70] who pace the streets of De Quincey's London, and who are reminiscent of the 'harlots,' 'hapless' children, 'sighs' and 'chartered streets,' of Blake's 'London.'[71] In 'The Pains of Opium,' the London maze subsequently mutates into a vertical labyrinth, a towering site of confinement which is expanding ad infinitum – I am talking, of course, of De Quincey's famous ekphrasis of Piranesi's *Imaginary Prisons*.

> Many years ago, when I was looking over Piranesi's Antiquities of Rome, Mr. Coleridge, who was standing by, described to me a set of plates by that artist, called his Dreams, and which record the scenery of his own visions during the delirium of a fever. Some of them (I describe only from memory of Mr. Coleridge's account) represented vast Gothic halls: on the floor of which stood all sorts of engines and machinery, wheels, cables, pulleys, levers, catapults, &c.&c. expressive of enormous power put forth and resistance overcome. Creeping his way upwards, was Piranesi himself: follow the stairs a little further, and you perceive it come to a sudden abrupt termination, without any balustrade, and allowing no step onwards to him who had reached the extremity, except into the depths below. Whatever is to become of poor Piranesi, you suppose, at least, that

[68] *Suspiria* in C, 94.
[69] *Suspiria* in C, 94.
[70] C, 16, 21, 35.
[71] William Blake, 'London' in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* [1789-1794] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 150.

> his labours must in some way terminate here. But raise your eyes, and behold a second flight of stairs still higher: on which again Piranesi is perceived, by this time standing on the very brink of the abyss. Again elevate your eye, and a still more aerial flight of stairs is beheld: and again is poor Piranesi busy on his aspiring labours: and so on, until the unfinished stairs and Piranesi both are lost in the upper gloom of the hall.--With the same power of endless growth and self-reproduction did my architecture proceed in dreams. In the early stage of my malady, the splendours of my dreams were indeed chiefly architectural: and I beheld such pomp of cities and palaces as was never yet beheld by the waking eye, unless in the clouds. (C, 70-71)

London, the 'unfathomed abyss,' turns into Piranesi's impossible prison, which is a towering site of architectural *croisements*. The ekphrasis seems to suggest that De Quincey's imaginary constructions (or opium dreams) tend to proliferate in a most excessive way. The Gothic aspect of the city and of the *Imaginary Prisons*, with its vaults, keeps, cells, and convoluted architecture also echoes the opium-eater's dreams: 'with the same power of endless growth and self-reproduction did my architecture proceed in dreams' (C, 71). In the ekphrasis, Piranesi himself is represented wandering inside his own creation, trapped in the prison of his own mind. The description is suffused with abruptly fragmented staircases and structures that lead nowhere or disappear – it is a profoundly disjunctive space. Piranesi's wanderings through his own involved prisons strangely echo De Quincey's earlier perambulations through London's 'steps,' 'porticoes' and 'never-ending terraces' (C, 21, 34). Nietzsche declared that 'if we had to venture upon an architecture after the style of our own souls (we are too cowardly for that!) a labyrinth would have to be our model.'[72] De Quincey did sketch such a construction, with the result that both artists, both selves, seem to be lost in the midst of an ever-expanding space. Thus, what De Quincey seems to dread the most – the feeling that there is no unity to the self, that he is eternally fragmented, that he is alien to himself and without a clear identity – is encapsulated in these metaphors. The destabilizing perspectives evoked in his descriptions of London and of Piranesi's *Prisons* correspond to the lack of coherence in the self that De Quincey fears. De Quincey's digressive writing, with its tendency to begin anywhere and meander into discursive alleys, seems to follow the convolutions of his urban perambulations or of Piranesi's perplexing architecture. The opium visions of the London

[72] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day* [1881] (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1924), 174.

streets, like Piranesi's *Prisons*, with all their *croisements*, are a metaphor for the protagonist's mind. De Quincey's dreams can give us access to 'something far more deeply interfused'[73]: 'And the dreaming organ, in connexion with the heart, the eye and the ear, compose a magnificent apparatus which forces the Infinite into the chambers of the human brain, and throws dark reflections from eternities below all life upon the mirrors of the sleeping mind.'[74] Like Coleridge's 'Kubla-Khan,'[75] with its 'pleasure dome' and 'caverns measureless to man,' De Quincey's opiated visions of London can give us access to the deeper recesses of the self. The text is made up of endless echoes, which reflect the lack of unity of the self.

The aesthetics of *croisement* developed in the passage also reflects the intricacies of De Quincey's intertextual references to other texts. We will come back to this point later, but for now, let us say that in the *Confessions,* one can hear the distant echoes of the Romantic peripatetic ideal of fusion of the self with nature. For Wordsworth, 'to go a journey is to throw off a burden, what he called at the beginning of *The Prelude*: "That burthen of my own unnatural self, / The heavy weight of many a weary day / Not mine, and such as were not made."'[76] Walking enables him to shed the restrictive weight of a stabilized identity and to embrace his true self. Thus, walking helps recover the self by connecting the poet with the landscape and the people. In his essay entitled 'Mr. Wordsworth,' Hazlitt wrote: 'He has dwelt among pastoral scenes, till each object has become connected with a thousand feelings, a link in the chain of thought, a fibre of his own heart.'[77] In the *Confessions* too, walking brings about the fusion of the self with the cityscape or labyrinth, but it is perceived as a terrifying ordeal. The Romantic intertext – or *croisement* – magnifies, by contrast, the sense of dread generated by the city. The cityscape mirrors the sense of self which is perceives as fragmented, destabilized, and endlessly self-replicating. The walker projects his sense of self onto the city and vice versa, internalizes the sense of fragmentation and disorientation which is inherent to the city.

[73] Wordsworth, 'Lines written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey,' v. 97, *The Major Works*, 134.
[74] *Suspiria* in C, 88.
[75] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Kubla Khan,' in William Keach (ed.), *The Complete Poems* (London: Penguin Classics, 1997), 250.
[76] Jeffrey Cane Robinson, *The Walk: Notes on a Romantic Image* [1989] (Normal Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press, 2006), 18.
[77] William Hazlitt, *Lectures on the Living Poets: The Spirit of the Age* (Grasmere: the Wordsworth Trust, 2004), 206.

Indeed, in the third book, 'the Pains of Opium,' opium reveals, in a hallucinatory way, the quintessence of the London experience, which is one of interweaving and *croisements*. In his opium dreams, De Quincey relives his London walks, which often turn into nightmarish visions – the memories of his night walks in the midst of the London crowd transform into a terrifying ordeal:

> For all this, however, I paid a heavy price in distant years, when the human face tyrannized over my dreams, and the perplexities of my steps in London came back and haunted my sleep, with the feeling of perplexities moral or intellectual, that brought confusion to the reason, or anguish and remorse to the conscience. (C, 48)

In this passage, the transition from the realm of reality ('steps') to that of dreams ('haunted') is made obvious. This image of wandering leading to a downwards movement is a recurrent trope in the *Confessions*. The references to Milton evoke the idea of Satan, the fallen angel, and that of the fall of man, which are both vertical descents into hell. This is made very clear in the following passage, in which De Quincey describes his mental wanderings as a downward spiral which leads him into infernal space:

> I seemed every night to descend, not metaphorically, but literally to descend, into chasms and sunless abysses, depths below depths, from which it seemed hopeless that I could ever re-ascend. Nor did I, by waking, feel that I had re-ascended. This I do not dwell upon; because the state of gloom which attended these gorgeous spectacles, amounting at last to utter darkness, as of some suicidal despondency, cannot be approached by words. (C, 68)

It seems that the protagonist's opium wanderings move him not only across the surface of the earth and of the city, but also along a vertical axis. As the narrative progresses, the London crowd undergoes a sort of anamorphosis. The crowd is first described as 'many myriads of human faces' (C, 34), then as 'the tyranny of the human face,' and then turns into a macabre vision of the Styx carrying countless bodies down its stream. This stream carries De Quincey off with it:

> But now that which I have called the tyranny of the human face began to unfold itself. Perhaps some part of my London life might be answerable for this. Be that as it may, now it was that upon the rocking waters of the ocean the human face began to appear: the sea appeared paved with innumerable faces, upturned to the heavens: faces, imploring, wrathful, despairing, surged upwards by thousands, by

> myriads, by generations, by centuries: – my agitation was infinite, – my mind tossed – and surged with the ocean. (C, 72)

His terrifying nightmares originate in the disquieting multiplication of human beings, which leads to visions of the East as a strange matrix engendering hordes of human beings: 'Southern Asia is, and has been for thousands of years, the part of the earth most swarming with human life; the great officina gentium. Man is a weed in those regions' (C, 73). The *Confessions* end with a quote from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which takes up this ghastly image of the crowd as a disquieting multitude: 'My sleep is still tumultuous, and, like the gates of Paradise to our first parents when looking back from afar, it is still (in the tremendous line of Milton) – With dreadful faces throng'd and fiery arms' (C, 80). These enigmatic and impenetrable human faces evolve into this haunting obsession. In *Suspiria*, De Quincey harks back to this persistent extended metaphor of the human face: 'Faces began soon to "dislimn:" features fluctuate: combinations of features unsettle; the faces of infants, though they are divine like the flowers of a savanna of Texas soon overtaken by the pursuing darkness that swallows all things human.'[78] Through the veil of opium, the experience of passing human beings by in the street engenders a *croisement* of another kind – the London crowd becomes exponentially multiplied and magnified. C*roisement* contains the idea of reproduction but also that of hybridization – a cross is also 'an instance of the mixture of the characteristics of different individuals; something intermediate in character between two things.'[79] De Quincey's feeling of dread comes precisely from the mixture of so many separate identities. The protagonist cannot establish clear boundaries for himself anymore, which constructs the subject as abject, according to Julia Kristeva's definition in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*: 'There looms, within abjection, […] a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable.'[80] The 'ocean of the human face' is disquieting precisely because it makes the subject's sense of self waver. This idea of rhizomic *croisement* with others, of being permanently connected with countless dead bodies, both physically and mentally is an infinite source of dread.

Thus, the *croisements* which inform the opiated experience of the city, (the stream of passing faces, the labyrinth, the ever-expanding crowd) are constant sources of terror in the

[78] *Suspiria* in C, 116.
[79] 'cross, *n.*' OED.
[80] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror; An Essay on Abjection* [1980], trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 1.

Confessions, and this sense of dread at the thought of permanent connection with others is a recurring theme at the time. This sense of dreaded inescapable connectedness is expressed even more clearly in the fever delirium of Esther in *Bleak House*:

> Dare I hint at that worse time when, strung together somewhere in great black space, there was a flaming necklace, or ring, or starry circle of some kind, of which I was one of the beads! And when my only prayer was to be taken off from the rest and when it was such inexplicable agony and misery to be a part of the dreadful thing?[81]

The metaphor of the pearl necklace, for Esther, represents 'the worst,' which is this sense of ineluctable connection to others. In these two examples, these visions stem from these characters' experience of the city but only truly 'materialize' when they are either dreaming, under the influence of opium or in the throes of fever – when consciousness loosens its grip on them. However, this sense of rhizomic *croisement* which penetrates the self is perhaps most strikingly represented in *Mrs Dalloway*. In the following passage, this connectedness literally paralyzes Septimus with fear:

> Everything had come to a standstill. The throb of the motor engines sounded like a pulse irregularly drumming through an entire body. The sun became extraordinarily hot because the motor car had stopped outside Mulberry's shop window; old ladies on the tops of omnibuses spread their black parasols; here a green, here a red parasol opened with a little pop. Mrs. Dalloway, coming to the window with her arms full of sweet peas, looked out with her little pink face pursed in enquiry. Every one looked at the motor car. Septimus looked. Boys on bicycles sprang off. Traffic accumulated. And there the motor car stood, with drawn blinds, and upon them a curious pattern like a tree, Septimus thought, and this gradual drawing together of everything to one centre before his eyes, as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames, terrified him. The world wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames. It is I who am blocking the way, he thought. Was he not being looked at and pointed at; was he not weighted there, rooted to the pavement, for a purpose? But for what purpose?[82]

[81] Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* [1853] (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), chapter 35, 556.
[82] Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* [1925] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 12-3.

The metaphor of the city as a body induces the idea that each individual becomes like a synapse, or a monad link in the urban space, and the city becomes an immense nerve system with infinite potential for new connections. It is this inescapable sense of connectedness which provokes Septimus's paralyzing sense of dread. This metaphor of the nervous system is explicitly used further on in the novel when Septimus perceives the city as roots growing under his skin.

> Scientifically speaking, the flesh was melted off the world. His body was macerated until only the nerve fibres were left. It was spread like a veil upon a rock. He lay back in his chair, exhausted but upheld. He lay resting, waiting, before he again interpreted, with effort, with agony, to mankind. He lay very high, on the back of the world. The earth thrilled beneath him. Red flowers grew through his flesh; their stiff leaves rustled by his head. Music began clanging against the rocks up here. It is a motor horn down in the street, he muttered; but up here it cannoned from rock to rock, divided, met in shocks of sound which rose in smooth columns (that music should be visible was a discovery) and became an anthem, an anthem twined round now by a shepherd boy's piping (That's an old man playing a penny whistle by the public-house, he muttered) which, as the boy stood still came bubbling from his pipe, and then, as he climbed higher, made its exquisite plaint while the traffic passed beneath.[83]

Septimus is a war veteran and a traditional shell-shock case, so he too, is in an altered state of consciousness. Trauma has deprived him of feelings, but has also enabled him to develop an alternative perception – he can see beyond appearances, 'into the life of things'[84]. He is a hypersensitive character, brimming over with visions which he cannot shut out. His nervous system and the city's nervous system become undifferentiated. He superimposes visions of the war which he has internalized onto the city, but is perhaps closer to the truth than most characters. This altered mode of consciousness allows him to unveil the madness of the city's social order. It is perhaps precisely when one is 'distracted' that one can grasp the nature of the city best. It seems that the essential dreadful nature of the city can only be fully revealed to us in altered states of consciousness.

[83] Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 58.
[84] Wordsworth, 'Tintern Abbey', v. 49, *The Major Works*, 133.

However, De Quincey's writing also conveys a great sense of enjoyment in this experience of loss – be it within the city or within the recesses of the self. There is a sense of Gothic pleasure or 'delightful horror,' to borrow Burke's expression, in De Quincey's writing about the experience of *croisement*: 'delightful horror […] is the most genuine effect, and the truest test of the sublime.'[85] The experience of the London crowd, in the *Confessions*, is sublime. 'I suppose that, in the literal and unrhetorical use of the word myriad, I may say that on my different visits to London I have looked into many, many myriads of female faces, in the hope of meeting her' (C, 34). There is a form of jubilation in experiencing this myriad of *croisements*. The urban walker thus also derives pleasure from this immersion in the midst of the crowd. In 'The Painter of Modern Life,' Baudelaire described the *flâneur* as a passionate onlooker who derives pleasure from his position as a spectator of the urban scene.

> 'La foule est son domaine, comme l'air est celui de l'oiseau, comme l'eau celui du poisson. Sa passion et sa profession, c'est d'épouser la foule. Pour le parfait flâneur, pour l'observateur passionné, c'est une immense jouissance que d'élire domicile dans le nombre, dans l'ondoyant dans le mouvement, dans le fugitif et l'infini.[86]

Like De Quincey, Baudelaire insists on the sense of elation which 'becoming one flesh with the crowd'[87] generates. The pleasure generated by these *croisements* also stems from the fleetingness of the experience of passage in the crowd. De Quincey's word 'myriad' evokes a multi-faceted, kaleidoscopic crowd. Baudelaire uses the words 'ebb and flow,' 'movement,' and 'fleeting,' but more interestingly, in the same passage, he describes the *flâneur* as 'a mirror as vast as this crowd, a kaleidoscope endowed with consciousness.' Baudelaire's *flâneur* is a stroller whose environment is the city crowd, and who is able to perceive truth and aesthetic significance in the transient and fleeting experiences which urban walking provides. De Quincey's experience of *croisement*, like Baudelaire's, is one of pleasure and

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[85] Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* [1757], ed. Adam Phillips (New York: Oxford World's Classics, 2008), 67.

[86] Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', *OC*, vol. 2, 691. For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. […] Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. Or we might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life. (trans. Mayne, 9.)

[87] Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', *OC*, vol. 2, 691. 'Sa passion et sa profession, c'est *d'épouser la foule*.'

pain, and there is pleasure as well in De Quincey's experience of the labyrinth, and perhaps especially in the experience of writing about 'the pain of the labyrinth.'

The pleasure of transgressive writing: De Quincey's Aesthetics of Disorientation

Thus far, I have shown that *croisement* is at the root of the experience of walking in the city, and this is very clearly foregrounded in De Quincey's text. As the story progresses, the crisscrossing structure of the city becomes more and more involved and comes to be perceived as a maze. However, if we look at the structure of De Quincey's autobiography, the word *croisement* takes on a deeper significance, since it can be perceived as an informing principle of the *Confessions*. The proliferation is truly rhizomic since it also contaminates the textual space of the *Confessions*. Indeed, the Opium-Eater's digressive writing seems to mirror his meandering course through the London maze. Moreover, although De Quincey's proffered intention is to write an autobiography, the author's writing constantly refers to other texts. The experience of reading the *Confessions* is also one of *croisement* in the sense that the reader is confronted with the crisscrossing layers of this palimpsestic text, and he must navigate this intertextual maze just as De Quincey must find his way through the London labyrinth. The text thus opens a poetic space which generates intense pleasure for the reader who is making his way through the winding and complex paths of his prose, and also for the author himself, who delights in his own deviations and digressions.

A time / diegetic maze

The increasingly complex structure which underlies our perception of the city is also reflected in the diegesis of the *Confessions*. As we have said before, the word *croisement* refers to a movement which calls for a moment of pause. Those which inform the structure of the *Confessions* could be seen as pauses, as poetic hushes which interrupt the movement of the diegesis. Although De Quincey presents his *Confessions* as a straightforward biography, they are also inscribed in the very structure of the *Confessions*. De Quincey's narration is not a linear unfolding of events, but constantly digresses and meanders back and forth in time, which turns the plot into a diegetic maze.

The first lines of the *Confessions* seem to follow a regular course, but some clues already presage the more irregular patterns that are to come in the chapter 'The Pains of Opium.' For example, early in the *Confessions*, the protagonist is in the middle of preparing for his journey when the narration stops and the author decides to narrate his reaction to a painting (C, 10). Deviations such as this multiply as the text progresses – later on, as the author is recounting his dealings with his Oxford friend and a Jewish money-lender, he interrupts his narrative with a long footnote to relate a humorous anecdote concerning his dealings with that same money-lender (C, 25). A few pages further on, he digresses again and discusses the links between daring and fortune, and then apologizes to his readers for straying away from his original subject: 'I dally with my subject because, to myself, the remembrance of these times is profoundly interesting. But my reader shall not have any further cause to complain: for I now hasten to its close' (C, 30). These deviations from the main storyline are rather infrequent in the 'Preliminary Confessions,' but are characteristic of the 'The Pains of Opium' section.

Indeed, in the second part of the text, the main storyline is constantly interrupted by moral or medical remarks, new pieces of information meant to throw a new light on the main narrative. These additions tend to become longer and more frequent as the opium dreams take on a greater importance. In another passage, the author mentions opium anecdotes related by other opium-eaters, and thus refers to other written works (C, 57). These digressions become so extensive that the author has to signal them to the reader and insist on the structured quality of his text. After his long digressing comparison between opium and wine, he states: 'Having dwelt so much on this first and leading error, in respect to opium, I shall notice briefly a second and a third' (C, 43). Further on, when he describes the intense pleasure he felt during an opera, he deviates from his subject and launches into a discourse and general considerations about the delights of music, and then stresses his awareness of the fact that he is straying off his subject: 'But this is a subject foreign to my present purposes' (C, 45). Here we see that the path taken by the writing on the page is intertwined with the convolutions of the dreams which move De Quincey's pen – as if they were footsteps – to new destinations. The effects of opium on the protagonist's mind become more discernible as the digressions multiply and lengthen, and the text becomes more and more fragmented.

This fragmentation of the text is visually represented on the page by the numbering of the paragraphs, and also underlined by the author's own words:

> For several reasons, I have not been able to compose the notes for this part of my narrative into any regular and connected shape. I give the notes disjointed as I find them, or have now drawn them up from memory. Some of them point to their own date; some I have dated; and some are undated. Whenever it could answer my purpose to transplant them from the natural or chronological order, I have not scrupled to do so. (C, 62)

The text thus becomes more and more contaminated by these wanderings and gives the reader notes on how to navigate the space of his text, a sort of map to understand the distorted chronology. *Suspiria de Profundis* is the perfect example of the way the *Confessions* function – De Quincey elaborates on his dreams, while there is no clear beginning or end to the story – *Suspiria* is a wandering text. More generally, the numerous footnotes, explanatory notes, revised editions and sequels to the *Confessions* that De Quincey progressively added are tell-tale signs pointing to the fact that De Quincey's writing is wandering in every direction. The totality of these productions and additions forms an intricate maze through which the reader has to find his or her way.

De Quincey also seems to scorn the limits imposed upon him by chronology and to prefer digressions, detours, and analepses. The author seems to be roaming between two different 'time zones.' Max Dupperay, quoting Jean-Jacques Mayoux, explained that De Quincey wanders between two conceptions of time in his *Confessions*:

> Dans l'imaginaire romantique, [… il y a] une antithèse, Jean-Jacques Mayoux le suggère, entre 'temps laïc et matériel, temps professionnel' et 'temps musical et sacré qui, dans son ampleur, porte l'homme et son histoire au confins des mystères.' Lorsqu'on ouvre les confessions, on pense que l'auteur va s'embarquer dans la relation rétrospective d'une partie de sa vie.[88]

If we look at the beginning of the narrative, the author seems to obey the law of material time, and the narrative does follow a linear and chronological order: 'My father died, […] I was

[88] Max Duperray, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, Thomas De Quincey* (Paris: CNED, Armand Colin, 2003), 41. 'Jean-Jacques Mayoux suggests there is a contradiction within the Romantic imagination between "secular, material, professional time" and "musical and sacred time," the scope of which takes man to the farthest reaches of mystery. When readers open the *Confessions*, they are misled into thinking the author is about to give a retrospective account of a part of his life.'

sent to various schools,' – 'The morning came, which was to launch me into the world' (C, 6, 9). Yet, the opium visions come to alter this linear unfolding of events. The experience of reading about De Quincey's encounter with Ann itself is unsettling since De Quincey constantly refers back to it in the *Confessions*. This haunting *croisement* breaks up the linear chronology of the autobiographical genre. The encounter with the druggist who gives him opium for the first time redoubles the disorienting effect generated by Ann's disappearance. Opium-taking engenders distortions in the linear progress of the narrative, which starts to wander in every direction. The story in the *Confessions* sometimes undergoes abrupt accelerations: 'Move on, if you please, reader, to 1813,' 'Now, then reader, from 1813, where all this time we have been sitting down and loitering – rise up, if you please, and walk forward about three more years' (C, 52, 53). This represents direct injunctions to the reader to walk alongside De Quincey and follow his trajectory, however whimsical. In some places, he completely forsakes chronology: 'Whenever it could answer my purpose to transplant them from the natural or chronological order, I have not scrupled to do so' (C, 62). In other places, he neglects to connect different events in time: 'I shall now enter "*in medias res*" and shall anticipate, from a time when my opium pains might be said to be at their *acmé*' (C, 63). There is no scruple for De Quincey since the whole of his text is a seduction of the reader away from the paths of reason and chronology. Max Duperray envisions this as a vast totality on which all times are present: 'Il y a dans les 'Pains of Opium,' coïncidence entre le temps vécu et le temps narré, une relation 'à chaud' des rêves de l'opium. 'The vast expansion of time,' ouvre au sujet l'accès d'une totalité sidérante où tout s'est enregistré sans distinction hiérarchique, le passé et le présent venant se confondre avec une même acuité.'[89] This evokes the image of the text as a surface on which times coexist as in the unconscious described by Freud. The *Confessions* keep crossing back and forth in time, which gives us the impressions that the line of time, if we tried to represent it visually, would resemble labyrinth or a knot.

One should point out that the artistic and poetic quality of De Quincey's writing is one of the most seductive aspects of the text. His writing illustrates the deeply seductive power of meandering – and of *flânerie*. De Quincey's enjoyment of his own digressions is, in some places, made quite evident. The numerous footnotes, sequels, explanatory notes and revised editions subsequently published by De Quincey are perhaps also the sign that these

[89] Duperray, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, 43.

digressions are an aesthetic choice. In *Suspiria*, De Quincey gives the image of the caduceus as the emblem of his work:

> I tell the critic that the whole course of this narrative resembles, and was meant to resemble, a *caduceus* wreathed about with meandering ornaments, or the shaft of a tree stem hung around and surmounted with some vagrant parasitical plants. The mere medical subject of the opium answers to the dry withered pole, which shoots all the rings of the flowering plants, and seems to do so by some dexterity of its own; whereas, in fact, the plant and its tendrils have curled round the sullen cylinder by mere luxuriance of *theirs*.[90]

In this passage, De Quincey openly admits that the autobiography and all which relates to the medical effects of opium are but paltry excuses, and he explains, through the metaphor of the caduceus, that the beautiful, complex and involved pattern of *croisements* drawn by his digressive and poetic writing is the true object of his narrative. The aesthetic principle of wandering which seems to rule the writing of the *Confessions* appears to be a source of pleasure and relief for both the author and the reader. I would conclude that the text itself is a work of written *flânerie* and wandering – De Quincey's text is a labyrinth, a site of fragments, a mosaic. The *Confessions* constantly wander away from interpretation and elude definition, and it is our role, as readers, to make our way through this conglomeration of images, myths and types that inhabit the pages of the text as they do the streets of a city. The image of the caduceus seems to suggest that De Quincey's writing is a sort of paradoxical wandering, both meandering and controlled, which, like urban walking, offers relief and pleasure to the author. The idea that the narrator and the reader meander through the novel in a flâneurial way remains a common trope throughout the century. To take but one example, Dickens's 1850 *David Copperfield* opens with a digression about an old lady and her objections to 'mariners and others, who had the presumption to go "meandering" about the world.' [91] The narrator underlines this deviation from chronology before resuming the course of his narrative: 'Not to meander myself, at present, I will go back to my birth.'[92]

We have explored the horizontal meanderings of De Quincey's text, that is, its wanderings and *croisements* on the horizontal plane of the page, on the diegetic level. One

[90] *Suspiria* in C, 94.
[91] Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* [1850] (London: Penguin Classics, 1996), 12.
[92] Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 12.

might now wish to examine the extent to which De Quincey's wanderings take place on a vertical level, on the level of intertextuality, the *Confessions* having a marked palimpsestic quality.

a. Intertextual croisements: the unfathomable Palimpsest

De Quincey's text is a site of *croisement* in that it intersects with a multitude of other texts and images which came before it, but also with texts which emerged after it was published, since as Barthes explained, the text is a texture whose meaning is woven by the work of the reader. The images of the labyrinth, of Piranesi's *Prisons* and of the palimpsest all illustrate in different ways how intertextuality functions. These endlessly intricate *croisements* are depicted as sources of both infinite pleasure and infinite pain.

I will start by exploring the earlier-mentioned ekphrasis of Piranesi's *Prisons*, which is a striking representation of the anxieties surrounding literary influences which underlie De Quincey's writing.[93] De Quincey's description of the *Prisons*, with their disjunctive yet endless flights of stairs, is a striking visual exemplification of how other texts are woven into the texture of the *Confessions*. Words spin webs of connection between former texts which sometimes seem to sink into oblivion and yet suddenly reappear in unexpected places. Piranesi's plates illustrate how staircases come to 'sudden abrupt terminations' and yet start again in other places, just as intertexts 'disappear into the depths below' the text and resurface unexpectedly in other places. To pick up on a previously mentioned image, literary influences develop in a rhizomic way. De Quincey's ekphrasis forms a hybrid visual and textual space, combining Piranesi's plates, an oral account by the Romantic poet Coleridge and an extract from a Wordsworth poem. De Quincey's own aggrandized version of these *Prisons* is literally a cross or a *croisement* between all these sources. However, by calling Piranesi's etchings *Dreams* instead of *Prisons*, De Quincey stresses the idiosyncrasy of his vision and suggests that these *Prisons* are mainly the product of his own opiated imagination. The whole passage is pervaded by a tension between the singularity of the vision and its contagion by other visions. The text is dominated by a sense of irrepressible proliferation – the description of the

[93] See Figure 11. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 'The Drawbridge', plate 7 from *The Imaginary Prisons (Le Carceri d'Invenzione)*, Rome, 1761 edition (reworked from 1745).

Prisons expands so much that it seems to invade De Quincey's dreams – unless, again, it is the dreams which morph into the prisons: 'With the same power of endless growth and self-reproduction did my architecture proceed in dreams' (C, 71). It seems that the vision cannot be contained within the frame of the engraving, or within the frame of a single narrative. De Quincey then aggrandizes this vision further by using an excerpt from Wordsworth's poem 'The Excursion' depicting one of the poet's dream visions:

The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,
Was of a mighty city—boldly say
A wilderness of building, sinking far
And self-withdrawn into a wondrous depth,
Far sinking into splendour—without end!
Fabric it seem'd of diamond, and of gold,
With alabaster domes, and silver spires,
And blazing terrace upon terrace, high
Uplifted. (C, 71)

De Quincey's vision seems to fill up space from the ground up, from the underground vaults and dungeons of Piranesi's *Prisons* to the 'alabaster domes and silver spires' of Wordsworth's poem. This vision also encompasses a vast expanse of time, since it starts with a scene showing De Quincey and Coleridge beholding Piranesi's 'Antiquities of Rome,' then moves to Piranesi's 1745 *Prisons*, and ends up on Wordsworth's 1814 *Excursion*. Coleridge's 1797 poem 'Kubla Khan,' with its 'caverns measureless to man' and 'sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice,' is another intertext which weaves its way into the readers' imagination on reading De Quincey's lines. What De Quincey illustrates in this description is how literary influences become woven into his text, and how other images and texts may subsequently also cross the readers' mind and feed into this vision. This ekphrasis is a fragment of the immense rhizome of literary influences De Quincey is both drawing on and painting with. Deleuze and Guattari's description of a rhizome could just as well be applied to De Quincey's ekphrasis of Piranesi's *Prisons*.

> The rhizome is reducible neither to the one nor to the multiple. It is not the One that becomes Two or even directly three, four, five, etc. It is not a multiple derived from the One, or to which One is added (n + 1). It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows ad overspills. It constitutes linear

> multiplicities with n dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency, and from which the One is always subtracted (*n* – 1). When a multiplicity of this kind changes dimensions, it necessarily changes nature, undergoes a metamorphosis.[94]

De Quincey depicts an Esher-like maze, a rhizomic, disjunctive, intermedial space which intertwines visual and verbal sources and which illuminates the intricacies of intertextuality.

What is striking in De Quincey's description is the sense of anxiety that stems from this textual and visual image of literary *croisements*. In a remarkable article entitled 'Abysmal Influence: Baudelaire, Coleridge, De Quincey, Piranesi, Wordsworth,' Arden Reed has examined in detail how the notion of influence between these authors' literary productions functions. For him, 'the job of literary history so understood is to write a genealogy, to draw a family tree, in short, to trace a line of influence. But it may not always be possible to trace a line. There may be times when that line gets hopelessly tangled in a labyrinth or lost in an abyss.'[95] For him, this story is infinitely complex and full of involuntary and incontrollable repetitions, and hinges on a rhetoric of the uncanny. He uses De Quincey's Piranesi ekphrasis to explain how these *croisements* between different texts work, and how the text itself becomes a labyrinth. As Reed explains, 'just where one is confidently following the line of influence, the text itself inscribes a labyrinth, doubling and redoubling the line, folding it over and in on itself.'[96]

> De Quincey is looking over Piranesi's famous engravings of Roman antiquity when the irrepressible babbler Coleridge intrudes from the sidelines to tell a story: disrupts De Quincey's quiet perusal in several ways. Coleridge shifts the context from history (Rome) to fiction (Dreams), and so it could be said breaking the line of influence from classical antiquity, from the present engravings to a missing set of engravings, and from a visual artefact to a verbal one. Moreover, the story concerns disorientation.[97]

The aesthetics of *croisement* which De Quincey crystallises in his ekphrasis is precisely this aesthetics of disorientation which obfuscates the origins of the text. Piranesi's plates of the

[94] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 23.
[95] Arden Reed, 'Abysmal Influence: Baudelaire, Coleridge, De Quincey, Piranesi, Wordsworth,' *Glyph* 4 (1978), 189-206, (p. 190).
[96] Reed, 190.
[97] Reed, 192.

Prisons represent many prisoners, but in his description, Coleridge identifies the figures with the artist himself, 'making the story into a parable of the artist imprisoned in his own design – Piranesi as Daedalus.'[98] The prison takes on dizzying proportions, and categories such as 'inside' and 'outside,' 'top' and 'bottom' make no sense in this impossible space. For Reed, '"Piranesi" could be ascending to heaven or descending into hell.'[99] Paradoxically, the top of the prison, where light is supposed to filter in, is a place of gloom. The distorted echoes between the different flights of stairs give the impression of a profoundly uncanny architecture. For Reed, this uncanny, crisscrossing architecture mirrors the workings of intertextuality and the sense of anxiety which results from it:

> This labyrinthine structure is a kind of abyss: it literally contains an abyss, or an infinite number of abysses. There is one at the end of every step. How is the prisoner to know the inside from the outside? Paradoxically, the connection between this text and other texts is the abyss itself. The etymology of the word 'influence' indicates that it is 'a flowing in,' then it involves an endless emptying out into the abyss. This text that contains an abyss (abîme) is itself a mise en abyme, that is, a text composed by doubling and redoubling itself within itself. The labyrinth is not a single structure but one that proliferates itself (s'abîmer) endlessly in Piranesi's engraving, and through a series as one engraving repeats itself in another, interrupted by the abyss between the plates. It is this self-duplicating power that imprisons the artist: his creations become self-creating and swallow him up.[100]

Thus, for Reed, the passage is a mise en abyme (abyss) of the creative process. Reed's critical text itself seems to be contaminated by the aesthetics of *croisement* which he sees as the core of De Quincey's text. As Reed points out, 'the status of this narrative with respect to emitter and receiver has fast become unexpectedly unstable, complicating efforts to trace one simple line of influence.'[101] This image tallies with the metaphor of weaving used to describe how intertextuality functions: the threads of the different texts which make up any one text are so tangled as to make its origins untraceable.[102] Although he never uses the word, the model of

[98] Reed, 192.
[99] Reed, 193.
[100] Reed, 193.
[101] Reed, 192.
[102] Cécile Hanania, *Roland Barthes et l'étymologie* (Bruxelles: Peter Lang, 2010), 220. 'L'image de ce texte tissant ses fils est métaphorique, certes, mais aussi grandement symbolique. Car ce fil qui se tisse à foison en un inextricable réseau dont on ne peut démêler ni le début ni la fin est l'exact contrepoint d'une origine repérable et

croisement Reed imagines to explain how literary influences work is strikingly reminiscent of a rhizome, which 'operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots.'[103] The rhizome exemplifies the idea that texts crisscross continually below the surface of other texts and can resurface at any moment, but to retrace the genealogy of such movements is near-impossible. Some of Coleridge's images – which also condense earlier texts and images – reappear in Baudelaire's poems precisely because they have been crossed with other images in De Quinceyian texts. Reed also shows how fragments of De Quincey's (or Piranesi's?) vision are refracted in some of Baudelaire's poems: 'Baudelaire does not translate the Coleridge passage (or Piranesian imagery) in *Les Paradis artificels*, but conversely, we find passages from that story figuring directly in Baudelaire's poetry: the story of the Carceri reconstitutes itself and spirals through the *Fleurs du mal* and the *Spleen de Paris*.'[104] Reed mentions the poem 'Le gouffre,' which is particularly interesting because it returns to some of the concerns which we have explored in the *Confessions*: 'Hélas! tout est abîme, – action, désir, rêve, Parole !'[105] This could apply to De Quincey's text, in which everything – his walks, his desires, his dreams – seem to turn into an abyss under the influence of opium. The idea that words may transform into abysses is reminiscent of the idea that each word may lead to other signifiers, and thus to other texts, conjuring up the image of a potentially infinite intertextual chain. Further on, one of Baudelaire's verses could literally be applied to De Quincey's description of Piranesi's dream, in which space has become absolute terror: 'En haut, en bas, partout, la profondeur, la grève, Le silence, l'espace affreux et captivant...'[106] The poem ends on a De Quinceyian image: 'Ah! ne jamais sortir des Nombres et des Êtres!'[107] The poet's sense of vertigo seems to be rooted in the anxiety of being inextricably linked to 'the perpetual flow of the multitudes.'[108] Thus, the threads of the Piranesi's dream weave their way through Coleridge and De Quincey to reappear in a condensed form in Baudelaire's poetry. As Reed points out, if the Piranesi story does not directly figure in the *Paradis artificiels*, it is because it 'gets displaced leaving its traces elsewhere in

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assignable.' 'The image of this text weaving threads is a metaphor, but it is also highly symbolic. For this thread which weaves itself infinitely into an inextricable network, the beginning or the end of which one cannot untangle is the exact counterpoint of an identifiable and attributable origin.'

[103] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 23.

[104] Reed, 195.

[105] Baudelaire, 'Le Gouffre', *Les Fleurs du mal*, *OC*, vol. 1, 142-3. 'All is abyss — dream, act, desire, or word!' (trans. Campbell, 218).

[106] 'High up, low down, all round, the depth descending, The verge, the silence, the dread captor, Space.' (trans. Campbell, 218)

[107] 'Ah, never never From entities or numbers to be free!' (trans. Campbell, 218)

[108] Baudelaire, *OC, Les Paradis artificiels*, vol. 1, 400.

Baudelaire:'[109] 'The missing paragraph of the confessions turns out to be the absent centre of a nexus (link, bond) of Baudelaire texts that it generates. The centre, in other words, is itself like an abyss. […] The only way to remain faithful to a Piranesian text, it seems, is by violating it.'[110] What seems to bring these texts together is an aesthetics of disorientation – the closer we look at the threads of influence between these texts, the more hopelessly entangled they appear. Indeed, Reed also shows how later texts, like Baudelaire's, can belatedly reveal a forgotten *croisement* between De Quincey's text and a more ancient source. He quotes Baudelaire's 'Rêve parisien': 'Babel d'escaliers et d'arcades, C'était un palais infini.'[111] Reed makes the following remark:

> [Baudelaire's] image makes one pause to ask whether Piranesi did not have the Tower of Babel in mind all along in his design of a tower with spiral staircases extending infinitely into the sky, and represented in the universal language of pictures. De Quincey would thus come after Babel. For him the Tower is already destroyed, leaving a multiplicity of languages in its wake. The fragments of the Tower scattered or disseminated everywhere are the texts I have followed, each text resembling a broken piece of a holograph, still retaining a multidimensional image of the original. The abyss, in other words, becomes all the more abysmal in its dispersal. The 'phantoms' that De Quincey 'painted upon the darkness' are thus linguistic constructions which represent not so much the omnipotence of thought as the omnipotence of texts. The terror comes less from encountering a projection of the self than from being haunted by one's language.

I concur with Reed and would like to stress his point by quoting Roy Cambell's translation of Baudelaire's lines in 'Rêve parisien', which reactivates the De Quinceyian image of an infinite prison where top and bottom lose their meaning: 'Babels of stairways and arcades, Endless and topless to behold.'[112]

The metaphors of the labyrinth, of the *Carceri* and of the rhizome also reflect how the whole of the *Confessions* function. The text constantly mutates, changes shape and escapes definition. However, this polymorphous text is not only perceived in terms of pain and

[109] Reed, 194.
[110] Reed, 194.
[111] Baudelaire, 'Rêve parisien', *Fleurs du mal*, in *OC*, vol. 1, v.13-4, 102. 'Babel of arcades and stairways, It was a palace infinite, Full of basins and of cascade.' (trans. Aggeler, 36).
[112] Baudelaire, 'Parisian Dream', trans. Cambell, 137.

anxiety. The very *croisements* which constitute it make it a textual space through which one may wander with pleasure, which is an idea De Quincey explores by using the metaphor of the palimpsest.

De Quincey actually entitled a section of *Suspiria de Profundis* 'The Palimpsest.' This metatextual indication points to the *Confessions*'s own multi-layered structure. In *Suspiria*, De Quincey gives the example of a palimpsest, a piece of parchment on which were successively written a 'Greek tragedy,' a 'monkish legend,' and a 'knightly romance,' each of which 'has ruled in its own period' (C, 142). For him, these texts 'are not dead but sleeping:'

> In the illustration imagined by myself, from the case of some individual palimpsest, the Grecian tragedy had seemed to be displaced, but was not displaced, by the monkish legend; and the monkish legend had seemed to be displaced, but was not displaced, by the knightly romance. (C, 146)

In a similar fashion, De Quincey's text bears the traces of many texts which came before his, and the reader is invited to wander between the different layers of texts which shape the *Confessions*. The title of De Quincey's autobiography, the word 'confessions' affiliates his text to *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, which is often deemed to be the first Western autobiography ever written, and it also connects it to Rousseau's *Confessions* – he is thereby signalling he is a direct descendant of these illustrious autobiographers. It also associates his text to Wordsworth's autobiographical poems.[113] His proffered intention is thus to give the reader an account of his life, as the subtitle announces (*Confessions of an English Opium Eater: Being an Extract from the Life of a Scholar*), and as his first words seem to attest: 'I here present you, courteous reader, with the record of a remarkable period of my life' (C, 1). His insistence on the clarity and rationality of his autobiographical project might actually point to its fragility: 'upon this point I shall have occasion to speak at the close of my confessions, where I shall present the reader with the *moral* of my narrative' (C, 4). The intended rationality of the author stands in sharp contrast with the artistic qualities of the text, which, as was pointed out in the previous section, often digresses and metamorphoses into something quite different from an autobiography.

[113] Wordsworth, 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality From Recollections of Early Childhood' [1807], *The Major Works*, 297-302.

First of all, the age-old pattern of the fairy-tale seems to show through quite distinctly in De Quincey's text. The archetypal hero leaves the protection and comfort of his school and goes his own way to seek his fortunes: 'With Providence my guide, I set off on foot, – carrying a small parcel, with some articles of dress, under my arm' (C, 11). He comes across many difficulties along the road, and an 'accident' makes him 'bend his steps towards North Wales' (C, 11). In Wales, he subsists on 'blackberries, hips and haws,' and then finds refuge in the home of a benevolent family, and is chased away from this temporary harbour by the return of the all-powerful evil parents, like in fairy-tales. In this episode, the protagonist writes love-letters for one of the girls living in the house – the text thus wanders away from reality and moves towards fiction. Moreover, the capital city is peopled with suspicious characters such as the mysterious master of the house he sleeps in, the druggist, and money-lenders. De Quincey seems to find pleasure in populating his tale with arch villains and innocent children, and in transforming laudanum into a sort of magic elixir. The numerous descriptions of London as a labyrinthine space are also reminiscent of Gothic literature. Wordsworth's influence is also very present – Margaret Russet thinks De Quincey also modeled his text on some of Wordsworth's poems: 'From a beginning in imitation of "Tintern Abbey," then, De Quincey's narrative escalates into a gothic fable that exploits a consciousness of its own genre; a gothic about the perils of the gothic.'[114] De Quincey also quotes Milton repeatedly. The text ends with a quote from *Paradise Lost*, and one might also see a sort of epic streak in the *Confessions*. Another important intertextual reference which de Quincey uses throughout his text is the New Testament. Charles Rzepka has analysed in depth the parallels between Christ's life and De Quincey's account of his life – according to him, the story of Jesus informs the narrative structure of the author's early life story. [115] As Rzepka pointed out, the biblical aspect of De Quincey's writing endows the text with a form of sacredness and literary value, but it also induces a game of textual memory between the text and the reader, who might delight in spotting these *croisements* between the Gospels and the *Confessions*. De Quincey weaves a path into other literary texts which subverts the narrative line. This borrowing and recycling seems to me to give the reader more freedom to wander between the different layers of text.

[114] Margaret Russet, *De Quincey's Romanticism: Canonical Minority and the Forms of Transmission* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), 117.
[115] Charles J. Rzepka, *Sacramental Commodities: Gifts, Texts and the Sublime in De Quincey* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 89.

Thus, under the cover of an autobiography, De Quincey actually offers us a text about other texts, or inspired by other texts. However, this multi-layered textuality is precisely what makes his writing profoundly innovative. De Quincey explains that 'a palimpsest is a membrane or a roll cleansed of its manuscript by reiterated succession,'[116] which stresses the fact that his palimpsestic text is something new and different, and also emphasizes the fact that his text is enriched by all its layers. The palimpsest allows the readers to wander between the different strata of text and meaning. The modernity of De Quincey's text can thus be understood as a set of texts necessarily caught up with the construction of the past. These other texts are woven into the canvas of the *Confessions*, which can be conceived, like the city, as a space of bridges and crossing points in which the reader is invited to wander. Walking, like writing, has a palimpsestic aspect to it. The parallel between De Quincey's meanderings in the maze-like space of the city and the reader's in textual space is striking:

> La geste cheminatoire joue avec les organisations spatiales. […] Elle y crée de l'ombre et de l'équivoque. Elle y insinue la multitude de ses références et citations. Elle y est elle-même l'effet de rencontres et d'occasions successives qui ne cessent de l'altérer et d'en faire le blason de l'autre, c'est-à-dire le colporteur de ce qui surprend, traverse ou séduit ses parcours.[117]

Taking De Certeau's ideas into account here, we might say that a new discourse stems from De Quincey's wandering writing, as well as from his wandering walks. De Certeau's use of the words 'ombre,' 'équivoque,' 'surprend,' and 'séduit,' point to the importance of the element of mystery and play which is at the heart of meandering, which is equally important in the context of De Quincey's writing since the latter performs the same dance of suggestion, circumvolution and seduction with the mind of the reader. Thus, his aesthetic of disorientation endows his text with a deeply poetic quality which generates intense pleasure for the reader who is making his way through the winding and complex paths of his prose, and also for the author himself, who truly delights in his own deviations and digressions. To conclude, I would like to come back to the idea of place and space which I touched upon at the beginning of this section, and use Michel de Certeau's definition of these terms here.

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[116] *Suspiria* in C, 139.

[117] De Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien*, 153. 'The long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations. […] It creates shadows and ambiguities within them. It inserts its multitudinous references and citations into them (social models, cultural mores, personal factors). Within them it is itself the effect of successive en counters and occasions that constantly alter it and make it the other's blazon: in other words, it is like the peddler carrying something surprising, transverse or attractive compared with the usual choice. These diverse aspects provide the basis of a rhetoric. They can even be said to define it.' (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, 101)

> In *The practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau explains how every narrative implies 'a passage leading from one to the other.' Certeau thus targets the inevitable path that leads out of what he calls a "place," characterized by its deathlike stability, toward what he calls a "space," characterized by its openness and by the freedom deployed there.[118]

If narrative opens a new 'space,' it seems to me that De Quincey's imaginative, flâneurial, multi-layered writing truly opens a far-reaching, four-dimensional rhizomic space.

The *flâneur*'s experience is one of *croisement*. It is 'the action of crossing, passing across, intersecting, traversing, going through.'[119] It designates both connection and disconnection. Similarly, the text of the *Confessions* forms an intricate web of words, phrases, paragraphs and pages referring to each other and to other texts, crisscrossing, taking us in other directions and bringing us back into theirs folds. The *flâneur* experiences the city and its *croisements* as the reader of the *Confessions* experiences those of De Quincey's text. To borrow Barthes's words, I would say that the *flâneur*/reader 'tries to perceive the fabric [of the city text] in its texture, in the interlacing of codes, formulae and signifiers, in the midst of which the subject places himself and is undone, like a spider that comes to dissolve itself into its own web.'[120]

The following section of this chapter will examine how the experience of *croisement*, of walking the streets of London is depicted and translated later in the century.

III. Poe's 'The Man of the Crowd:' 'He crossed and re-crossed the way repeatedly'

[118] Frédéric Regard, *Mapping the Self: Space, Identity, Discourse in British Auto/Biography* (Saint-Etienne: Université de Saint-Etienne, 2003), 25.
[119] 'crossing, *n*.' OED.
[120] Barthes, 'Theory of the Text' in Young, *Untying the Text*, 39. 'La théorie actuelle du texte se détourne du texte-voile et cherche à percevoir le tissu dans sa texture, dans l'entrelacs des codes, des formules, des signifiants, au sein duquel le sujet se place et se défait, telle une araignée qui se dissoudrait elle-même dans sa toile.' (Barthes, "Théorie du texte", Encyclopedia Universalis, 1973.)

Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Man of the Crowd' was published in November 1840 in the Philadelphia publication *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*. Baudelaire translated it in *Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires* in 1857. The short story had a decisive influence on the shaping of his theory of the *flâneur* and on Benjamin's subsequent analysis of the figure. I will attempt to re-examine this story through the lens of the word *croisement* to understand what role it played in the construction of the *flâneur*.

'The Man of the Crowd' opens on a scene in which the convalescent narrator, displaying a 'calm but inquisitive interest in everything' (MOC, 229), is seen observing the crowd walking down a busy London thoroughfare. At the beginning of the text, we see him reading the crowd like a text and classifying it, neatly dividing it into discrete types. After a while, he spots a man he cannot read, and curiosity urges him to follow this illegible man through the crowd until morning. The heart of the story lies in the experience of *croisement* which results from seeing 'the tumultuous sea of human heads' (MOC, 229) stream past him in the urban crowd, and in the fear of illegibility which ensues from it. The immense popularity of the tale shows that it was an experience which was of course not limited to the London crowd. There were endless interactions (or *croisements*) between ways of imagining London, Paris and other great cities in the nineteenth century. However, the imaginative world (*imaginaire*) associated with Paris and perhaps especially London crowds certainly appealed to Poe. He set another of his crowd stories, the 1842 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt,' in Paris. However, as Michael Sheringham points out, 'Poe, who had lived in Stoke Newington as a child, very deliberately set the 'The Man of the Crowd' in London.'[121] He lived in London from 1816 to 1820, at a time when London had a population of well over a million inhabitants, and these London crowd scenes experienced as a child must have had a profound impact on his imagination, as they did for Dickens. As Sheringham points out, 'for Poe, as for Baudelaire, London is a hyperbolic city. […] It is crucial to the story that it sometimes takes the man an hour or more to negotiate a single street, 'so vast a difference is there,' writes Poe's narrator, "between a London populace and that of the most frequented American city."'[122] The very physical experience of *croisement* – of crossing the path of others, of watching the endless stream of faces rush past one, of being jostled by the crowd –

[121] Michael Sheringham, '"The Key of the Street": "London" in the Construction of "Paris"', *Synergies*, no. 3, (2010) 37-44, (p. 39).
[122] Sheringham, '"The Key of the Street"', 40.

is thus at the core of the tale. The narrator's and the reader's uneasiness seem to stem from the fear of not being able to read and interpret these numerous *croisements* correctly. Indeed, the idea of illegibility frames the story: the German quote '*es lässt sich nicht lesen*' both opens and closes the text. The switch of language here seems to highlight the idea that the text will centre on opacity of meaning. 'The Man of the Crowd' explores the trope of urban illegibility by attempting to frame different kinds of *croisements*.

The story is a *croisement* in that it brings together different literary traditions. This tale has received a considerable amount of critical attention because of its relations to both physiologies and to the detective story. The first part of my analysis will focus on how the tale articulates these two ways of deciphering the crowd: one might say, following Matthew Beaumont, that Poe 'reconstructs the story as a diptych.'[123] The image of the diptych, which designates 'an altar-piece or painting composed of two leaves which close like a book,'[124] illustrates very effectively the idea of a tale neatly divided in two distinct sections: the physiology and the detective story. Building on this image, I would like to argue that the word *croisement* suggests a pattern of weaving which is more involved than this, and that one might also look at 'The Man of the Crowd' as a canvas which intertwines those two traditions together to create a new pattern – or a new frame. I would also like to look at a different kind of framing: it seems that in his frantic, overzealous attempts to 'frame'[125] the man of the crowd, or to cross his path, the narrator is also attempting to frame his own self – that is to comprehend it, 'to give it structure, to shape it, to construct it.'[126] Finally, this short story is also a frame for another kind of *croisement*. The narrator's perplexity mirrors the reader's own puzzlement in his attempts to make sense of the mystery thus presented to us. This process of adjusting, of focusing, of accommodation, is at the heart of both the narrator's and the reader's experience of the urban text. As mentioned before, accommodation, in physiological terms, is 'the ability to focus on objects at different distances from the eye; the process of doing this, typically involving changes in the shape or position of the lens of the

[123] Matthew Beaumont, 'Convalescing' in Matthew Beaumont and Gregory Dart (eds.), *Restless Cities* (London, New York: Verso, 2010), 75.
[124] 'diptych, *n.*' OED.
[125] I am using the verb 'to frame' here to designate two things. 'frame, *v.*: to set in a frame; to enclose in or as in a frame'; 'to conspire to have a crime falsely pinned on someone'. OED.
[126] 'frame, *v.*' OED.

eye.'[127] This process of accommodation, which is central to the *flâneur*'s apprehension of the city, is the crux of 'The Man of the Crowd'.

1. Framing the tale: from the diptych to the canvas

a. The croisement/meeting of two literary genres

'The Man of the Crowd' is a *croisement* in that it connects two literary genres: it draws on the tradition of physiologies and contains the seeds of the emerging detective story. At first sight, it seems that the text is neatly divided in two sections which successively offer us two different 'Ways of Seeing.'

The protagonist of 'The Man of the Crowd' is first seen reading newspapers, and then shifting his reading activity to the crowd streaming past his window. His position is curiously reminiscent of that of the diorama spectator, who is immobile in the centre of the building while the 'world' moves around him: the exterior is just an entertainment to be gazed at, leisurely and safely. The narrator declares that he feels 'a calm but inquisitive interest in everything' (MOC, 229), and yet the text is pervaded by a sense of anxiety which appears to stem from the unknowability of the 'tides of population [….] rushing past [… his] door' (MOC, 230). To counter this feeling of illegibility, the narrator, like the *flâneur*-physiologist from the 1830s evoked in chapter 2, starts dividing the crowd into isolated categories. From his detached position, he demonstrates, in a quasi-scientific manner, that the urban crowd can be classified, and thus mastered, as can be seen in the following passage:

> The tribe of clerks was an obvious one; and here I discerned two remarkable divisions. There were the junior clerks of flash houses – young gentlemen with tight coats, bright boots, well-oiled hair, and supercilious lips. […] They wore the castoff graces of the gentry; and this, I believe, involves the best definition of the class. The division of the upper clerks of staunch firms, or of the "steady old fellows," it was not possible to mistake. These were known by their coats and pantaloons of black or brown, made to sit comfortably, with white cravats and waistcoats, broad solid-looking shoes, and thick hose or gaiters. (MOC, 230-1)

[127] 'accommodation, *n*.' OED.

The narrator's all-encompassing epistemological mastery is underscored here with words such as 'obvious,' 'discerned,' 'was not possible to mistake,' 'were known by.' His method seems to prove that the crowd can be studied, known and understood. One could say, following Benjamin, that the first part of the text enacts 'the phantasmagoria of the *flâneur*, [which is] to read from faces the profession, the ancestry, the character (AP [M6, 6], 429).' Poe obviously draws on the taxonomical conventions of physiologies which were by then firmly established.[128] As Jonathan Auerbach points out, Poe's method does not only follow the recent fashion for physiological categorization, it also adheres to earlier traditions of human classification: 'The narrator confidently contemplates 'the scene without' to provide us with a complete social taxonomy patterned after seventeenth and eighteenth-century Theophrastian character sketches.'[129] The fact that he observes the crowd at a large bow-window, at a remove, reinforces the impression of a panoptic, disciplining gaze. Foucault's words on panopticism could be applied to the narrator's dissecting gaze: 'Discipline fixes; it arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion; it dissipates compact groupings of individuals wandering […] in unpredictable ways; it establishes calculated distributions.'[130] Thus, in the first section of the text, as Auerbach remarks, we are presented with a vision of the crowd which follows a 'divinely ordained pattern, a stable hierarchy based on an aristocratic set of assumptions.'[131] The narrator has all the characteristics of the *flâneur*-physiologist of the 1830s, except for the fact that he is not walking. This might hint at the symbolic stillness of the narrator, whose method of physiological classification might by then have seemed somewhat rigid, formulaic and passé. According to Benjamin, the year 1841 was the high point of the fashion for physiologies, after which they rapidly declined (CB, 35).

However, once the lonely man of the crowd comes into his field of vision, the narrator's seemingly flawless classifying paradigm dissolves in a flash. The sudden irruption of this mysterious man on the scene is the fulcrum of the text – or of the diptych. The fear of

[128] Several critics endorse this view of things. See Dana Brand, 'From the *flâneur* to the detective: interpreting the city of Poe", in Tony Bennett (ed.), *Popular fiction: technology, ideology, production, reading* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990). James W. Werner, *American Flâneur, The Cosmic Physiognomy of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York & London: Routledge, 2004), and Jonathan Auerbach, 'Disfiguring the Perfect Plot: Doubling and Self-Betrayal in Poe', in *The Romance of Failure: First-Person Fictions of Poe, Hawthorne, and James* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 20–70.
[129] Auerbach, 'Disfiguring the Perfect Plot', 29.
[130] Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* [1975], trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 219.
[131] Auerbach, 'Disfiguring the Perfect Plot', 28.

illegibility forces the narrator into action, or rather movement – he feels compelled to chase after him. This is the moment, according to many critics, when the *flâneur*-physiologist transforms into the *flâneur*-detective. The following passage illustrates how the *flâneur* moves from one role to another, proving once again that he is polymorphous, as I have argued in previous chapters. The narrator/physiologist morphs into a detective when he decides to pursue the man of the crowd: 'Then came a craving desire to keep the man in view – to know more of him. Hurriedly putting on all overcoat, and seizing my hat and cane, I made my way into the street, and pushed through the crowd in the direction which I had seen him take; for he had already disappeared' (MOC, 233). All the paraphernalia of what has become the archetypal detective story is here: the overcoat, the hat, the handkerchief tied about the narrator's mouth, and the 'pair of caoutchouc overshoes, [which enables him to] move about in perfect silence' (MOC, 234; 235). Like any detective worth his salt, the narrator also meticulously lists all the clues he can ratiocinate from:

> I had now a good opportunity of examining his person. He was short in stature, very thin, and apparently very feeble. His clothes, generally, were filthy and ragged; but as he came, now and then, within the strong glare of a lamp, I perceived that his linen, although dirty, was of beautiful texture; and my vision deceived me, or, through a rent in a closely buttoned and evidently second-handed roquelaire which enveloped him, I caught a glimpse both of a diamond and of a dagger. These observations heightened my curiosity, and I resolved to follow the stranger whithersoever he should go. (MOC, 233-4)

The precise and exhaustive description draws our attention to potentially significant details, such as the diamond and the dagger. The tale also presents all the elements of the detective hunt. The chase is the spine of the tale – its twists and turns sustain the readers' interest: 'I resolved to follow the stranger whithersoever he should go' (MOC, 234). 'I was obliged to follow him closely' (MOC, 234). 'He turned and retraced his steps. Still more was I astonished to see him repeat the same walk several times-once nearly detecting me as he came around with a sudden movement' (MOC, 234-5). Finally, the moment of resolution brings the story to a close: 'The old man […] is the type and the genius of deep crime' (MOC, 237). All these elements are what make Benjamin say that 'Poe's famous tale "The Man of the Crowd" is something like the X-ray picture of a detective story' (CB, 48). The narrator's irresistible urge to track down the man of the crowd might also reflect the public's desire to move away from the monotony of physiological classification and signal its appetite for a new genre.

This classic reading of the tale, which has been endorsed by many critics, comes from Benjamin's analysis of both 'The Man of the Crowd' and of the general context of those years:

> The soothing little remedies which physiologists offered for sale were soon passé. On the other hand, the literature which concerned itself with the disquieting and threatening aspects of urban life was to have a great future. This literature, too, dealt with the masses, but its method was different from that of the physiologies. It cared little about the definition of types; rather, it investigated the functions which are peculiar to the masses in a big city. […] The masses appear as the asylum that shields an asocial person from his persecutors. Of all the menacing aspects of the masses, this one became apparent first. It is at the origin of the detective story (CB, 45).

While the *flâneur*-physiologist leisurely enjoyed watching the hustle and bustle of the streets, the detective had the ability to follow the criminal's traces in the crowd, which was the 'newest asylum for the reprobate and the prescript' (AP [M16,3], 446).' Being more powerful than his predecessor, he appeared on the literary scene to assuage the bourgeois fears of the anonymous and threatening masses. For Benjamin, this explains why the detective is the natural successor of the physiologist. 'The Man of the Crowd' does seem to illustrate this point, since the *flâneur*-become-detective decides to chase after the man of the crowd. For Benjamin, 'the original social content of the detective story was the obliteration of the individual's traces in the big-city crowd' (CB, 43). The detective's role is precisely to recover the traces left by criminals in the midst of the crowd, and track down the culprit. Brand points out that in terms of chronology, 'it would be more accurate to call it 'an embryo of the detective story.'[132] Brand's analysis follows Benjamin's, since for him, '"The Man of the Crowd" signifies Poe's critique of the interpretative strategies of the *flâneur*[-physiologist], [… and demonstrates that] the urban crowd cannot be reduced to comfortable transparency.'[133] He argues that the detective is an urban interpreter who can 'provide a more credible and complex assurance of urban legibility than could be found in the literature of the

[132] Brand, 'From the *flâneur* to the detective', 226. 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', conventionally considered the first detective story, was written by Poe immediately after the publication of "The Man of the Crowd."'
[133] Brand, 'From the *flâneur* to the detective', 88-9.

flâneur.'[134] For Benjamin, the transformation of the *flâneur*/physiologist into a detective is also reassuring because it reflects his assimilation into a utilitarian society which he had previously eluded: 'If the *flâneur* is thus turned into an unwilling detective, it does him a lot of good socially, for it accredits his idleness' (CB, 40-41). In James Werner's words, 'the ascent of the detective also signals the demise of the *flâneur* in his 'pure' state.'[135] Thus, for these critics, 'The Man of the crowd' thus seems to show us a neat transition from the ascendency of the physiologist to that detective, who seems to be able to have more cognitive control over the city. However, I would like to use Poe's tale to demonstrate that the *flâneur*, by essence, is never 'pure,' by showing that this distinction between the two parts of the tale is not as clear-cut as it seems.

b. Croisement/blurring of categories

Building on Matthew Beaumont's visual metaphor of the diptych, I would like to use the metaphor of the canvas to illustrate how Poe's aesthetics of *croisement* functions in 'The Man of the Crowd.' One could see physiologies and detective stories as the warp and woof of Poe's tale, as two genres which become so intertwined as to create a radically new pattern. Moreover, Poe then adds another unique, idiosyncratic layer of paint onto this canvas which contributes to making this tale unique. One might see physiologies as the warp of the canvas. In weaving, the warp is tied and stretched onto the loom before the weaving process begins.[136] By 1840, the tradition of physiologies had become a convention, and Poe uses it as the starting point and of his tale. However, Poe also subverts this tradition and complicates the pattern of the tale by drawing the weft[137] containing the seeds of the detective story through the warp of the tale, and by weaving in other literary references which draw on former literary traditions.

First of all, the *flâneur*-narrator of the tale himself can be said to be a *croisement*, a hybrid literary creation displaying some of the characteristics of the physiologist and some belonging to the detective, since he is one and the same person. Similarly, on a structural

[134] Brand, 'From the *flâneur* to the detective', 90.
[135] Werner, *American Flâneur*, 48.
[136] 'warp, *n*.: Weaving. The threads which are extended lengthwise in the loom, usually twisted harder than the weft or woof, with which these threads are crossed to form the web or piece.' OED.
[137] 'weft, *n*.: Weaving. The threads that cross from side to side of a web, at right angles to the warp threads with which they are interlaced: = woof.' OED.

level, one could argue that the threads of both genres are so inextricably woven together as to make them indistinguishable. Many critics have emphasized the similarities between the two parts of the tale. For Werner, for example, 'in Poe's formulation the detective and the *flâneur*[-physiologist] are closely aligned in characteristics and methodology.'[138] The uneasiness stemming from the illegibility of the crowd doesn't only pervade the second half of the text – the sense of epistemological mastery is everywhere precarious and incomplete. At the beginning of the text, the narrator's 'peering through the smoky panes' may hint at the opacity of the crowd and at the futility of his attempt to classify it. The verb 'to peer'[139] underlines both the arduousness of the task at hand and the unintelligibility of the object under scrutiny. Thus, even before the man of the crowd comes into sight, the narrator's visual acuity is compromised. Other problems also come to light with this type of classifying gaze. As Auerbach points out, 'the narrator's systematic binary differentiating turns his fellow humans into a set of exaggerated caricatures, the price he must pay to signify order, and see things whole.'[140] This caricaturing tendency is especially striking when the narrator describes the members of the crowd belonging to the lower classes:

> Drunkards innumerable and indescribable – some in shreds and patches, reeling, inarticulate, with bruised visage and lack-lustre eyes – some in whole although filthy garments, with a slightly unsteady swagger, thick sensual lips, and hearty-looking rubicund faces – others clothed in materials which had once been good, and which even now were scrupulously well brushed – men who walked with a more than naturally firm and springy step, but whose countenances were fearfully pale, and whose eyes were hideously wild and red; and who clutched with quivering fingers, as they strode through the crowd, at every object which came within their reach. (MOC, 232)

In this extract, the colours are heightened (bruised, rubicund, red), the features are enlarged and distorted (thick lips, hearty-looking, hideously wild) and human bodies are fragmented (visage, lips, fingers). The passage thus undermines physiognomical practice by showing how it hyperbolizes and deforms the crowd. Moreover, from the outset, the opening words 'innumerable and indescribable' hint at the fact that this categorizing task is doomed to failure. The physiological chart the narrator is trying to establish cannot contain this

[138] Werner, *American Flâneur*, 25.
[139] 'peer, *v.*: To look narrowly or closely, esp. in order to make out something indistinct or obscured.' OED.
[140] Auerbach, 'Disfiguring the Perfect Plot', 29.

'tumultuous sea of human heads' and is literally bursting at the seams (MOC, 230). His portraits become increasingly sketchy as he tries to 'encompass darker and deeper themes.' Indeed, cracks appear in the surface of his analytic model as soon as the narrator attempts to describe lower social categories. Even before the man of the crowd appears, the breakdown of this physiognomical model is reflected in a change in aesthetics. The orderly vision of the beginning of the text is progressively replaced by a set of Gothic images:

> […] all full of a noisy and inordinate vivacity which jarred discordantly upon the ear, and gave an aching sensation to the eye. As the night deepened, so deepened to me the interest of the scene; for not only did the general character of the crowd materially alter (its gentler features retiring in the gradual withdrawal of the more orderly portion of the people, and its harsher ones coming out into bolder relief, as the late hour brought forth every species of infamy from its den), but the rays of the gas-lamps, feeble at first in their struggle with the dying day, had now at length gained ascendancy, and threw over every thing a fitful and garish lustre. All was dark yet splendid. (MOC, 232-3)

The way Poe paints the interplay of dark and light engenders uneasiness in both narrator and readers and throws an uncanny light on the tableau. The play of light and shadow caused by the rays of gas-lamps distorts familiar objects and casts a shadow of uncertainty over them, or throws 'over every thing a fitful and garish lustre' as the street is slowly becoming cloaked in obscurity ('the night deepened,' 'the dying day,' 'all was dark'). The aesthetics of the scene translates the narrator's state of intellectual and cognitive uncertainty. An impression of dissonance dominates the scene, which is filled with 'noisy,' 'jar[ring]' sounds and indistinct shapes which give 'an aching sensation to the eye.' The aesthetics used throughout the scene – which is very similar to that of the Gothic sublime – seems to be encapsulated in the concluding sentence: 'All was dark yet splendid.' Through its use of Gothic aesthetics, the passage exposes the limitations of the rational physiological approach to reading the crowd, which does indeed display 'too much sense.'[141]

What this passage highlights is as much the lack of legibility of the crowd as the unreliability of the narrator's systematic method of observing the crowd. The narrator evokes

[141] Horace Walpole, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W.S. Lewis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937-83), vol. xxxviii, p. 380. 'A god, or at least a ghost, was absolutely necessary to frighten us out of too much sense.'

his recent illness at the beginning of the text and indicates that 'the film from the mental vision' has been lifted to leave his 'intellect, electrified surpass[ing] greatly its everyday condition' (MOC, 229). However, the text casts doubt upon this statement, since the narrator's analytical method quickly falters and instead of shedding light on the nature of the crowd, seems to cast a fantastic, uncanny veil over it, as was seen in the above-quoted example. This suggests that the narrator's peculiar frame of mind itself might be a 'smoky pane' – which obfuscates meaning.

> The wild effects of the light enchained me to an examination of individual faces; and although the rapidity with which the world of light flitted before the window prevented me from casting more than a glance upon each visage, still it seemed that, in my then peculiar mental state, I could frequently read, even in that brief interval of a glance, the history of long years. (MOC, 233)

There is something slightly troubling and 'wild' about the obsessive urge to read and categorize the crowd which the narrator displays. The narrator exhibits a compulsive need to register and analyse every detail pertaining to the crowd despite the rapidity with it flows past him. This 'mood of the keenest appetency' might be described as hypervigilance – an enhanced state of sensory sensitivity, the purpose of which is to detect threats. This state of hypervigilant observation of the outside paradoxically reflects the narrator's inner doubts. The narrator's insistent 'Discourse on the Method' of observing the crowd draws attention to its precarious, fallible nature. His excess of rationality paradoxically leads him into a strange sort of delirium. Interestingly, this passage is reminiscent of Descartes's own account of his observations of the crowd from his window. Descartes – considered by many as the father of rationalism – in his attempt to prove that he exists because he thinks, also seems to spiral out of reason by dint of excessive rationality:

> Cependant je ne me saurais trop étonner, quand je considère combien mon esprit a de faiblesse et de pente qui le porte insensiblement dans l'erreur. Car encore que sans parler je considère tout cela en moi-même, les paroles toutefois m'arrêtent, et je suis presque déçu par les termes du langage ordinaire; car nous disons que nous voyons la même cire, si elle est présente, et non pas que nous jugeons que c'est la même, de ce qu'elle a même couleur et même figure: d'où je voudrais presque conclure que l'on connaît la cire par la vision des yeux, et non par la seule inspection de l'esprit, si par hasard je ne regardais d'une fenêtre des hommes qui passent dans la rue, à la vue desquels je ne manque pas de dire que je vois des

> hommes, tout de même que je dis que je vois de la cire; et cependant que vois-je de cette fenêtre, sinon des chapeaux et des manteaux qui pourraient couvrir des spectres ou des hommes feints qui ne se remuent que par ressorts? Mais je juge que ce sont des hommes, et ainsi je comprends par la seule puissance de juger, qui réside en mon esprit, ce que je croyais voir de mes yeux.[142]

In this extract, Descartes is attempting to demonstrate his absolute faith in rationalism. However, the subject and onlooker – in this case, Descartes – is so completely immersed in solipsism that he considers the possibility that all the individuals walking past his window might be nothing more than 'artificial machines moved only by springs.' True knowledge, for Descartes, may only be attained through the faculty of judgment which is in the mind, and not through perception. Although in Poe's tale, the narrator tries to assert the preeminence of external perception, the great anxiety surrounding the perception of others leads the narrator into a sort of solipsistic delirium which is very reminiscent of Descartes's own speculations in his *Metaphysical Meditations*. The narrator's speculations are thus already spiraling out of control in the first part of the tale. One might suggest, following Matthew Beaumont, that urban life is the cause of this pervasive malady which engenders 'a state of delirium so habitual as to be almost unnoticeable.'[143]

Indeed, uncertainty seems to take an even greater hold on the narrator in the second part of the story, in which he immerses himself into the crowd and dons the attributes of the detective. I would like to show that the second part of the text undermines the would-be detective even further, thereby also undermining Benjamin's claims about the superiority of the detective's cognitive powers. This process of unravelling of the detective's powers echoes the text's undermining of the physiologist's powers and links both parts inextricably: these

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[142] René Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques* [1641], trans. Florence Khodoss (Paris: Quadrige, Presses Universitaires de France, 1956), Méditation seconde, [15], p. 49. 'Yet I cannot wonder enough when I consider how weak my mind is, and how insensibly inch'ned towards error. For although I consider all that within myself without speaking, nevertheless words impede me, and I am almost deceived by the terms of ordinary language, for we say that we see the same wax, if it is present, and not that we judge it to be the same because it has the same colour and shape; whence I would almost conclude that the wax is known by the sight of the eyes, and not by the perception of the mind alone. But when I look from the window and see men passing in the street, I do not fail to say at the sight of them that I see some men, just as I say that I see some wax, and yet what do I see from the window, except hats and cloaks which might cover artificial machines which moved only by springs? But I judge that these are men; and thus I comprehend by the mere power of judging which resides in my mind, what I believe I see with my eyes. (*Discourse on Method and Metaphysical Meditations by René Descartes*, 'Second Meditation: Of the Nature of the human mind, and that it is easier to know than the body' (London: The Walter Scott Publishing Co., 1837), 138.)

[143] Beaumont and Dart, *Restless Cities*, x.

croisements and echoes work together to further the epistemological anxiety surrounding analytical reading and ratiocination.

From the moment the man of the crowd appears, the narrator feels compelled to chase after him. However, his frantic pursuit does not shed light on the mystery. The plot actually seems to thicken as we plunge deeper into the dark heart of the city. The arrival of the man of the crowd confirms the breakdown of the physiological model which the text was already undermining from the start of the tale:

> With my brow to the glass, I was thus occupied in scrutinizing the mob, when suddenly there came into view a countenance (that of a decrepit old man, some sixty-five or seventy years of age) – a countenance which at once arrested and absorbed my whole attention, on account of the absolute idiosyncrasy of its expression. Any thing even remotely resembling that expression I had never seen before. I well remember that my first thought, upon beholding it, was that Retszch, had he viewed it, would have greatly preferred it to his own pictural incarnations of the fiend. As I endeavored, during the brief minute of my original survey, to form some analysis of the meaning conveyed, there arose confusedly and paradoxically within my mind, the ideas of vast mental power, of caution, of penuriousness, of avarice, of coolness, of malice, of blood-thirstiness, of triumph, of merriment, of excessive terror, of intense – of supreme despair. I felt singularly aroused, startled, fascinated. 'How wild a history,' I said to myself, 'is written within that bosom!' Then came a craving desire to keep the man in view – to know more of him. (MOC, 232)

The accumulation of contradictory terms the narrator uses to delineate the man's nature mirrors his state of epistemological anxiety. The old man can be construed as a synecdoche of the crowd, or even the city, since he engenders the same 'state of delirium' in the narrator. The image of paradoxical ideas jostling each other within the narrator's mind foreshadows his imminent physical and metaphorical descent into the crowd, which is an experience of confusion: 'If jostled, they bowed profusely to the jostlers, and appeared overwhelmed with confusion' (MOC, 230). The illegibility of the man of the crowd forces the narrator to leave his position of safety behind the pane of glass to experience this confusion. He is compelled to go through the looking glass to participate in the 'aggregate relations' which he had previously only observed from a distance. To explore the indecipherability of the man of the

crowd, I would like to borrow Dana Brand's expression, who points out that 'the old man is a gap in the urban text, a gap that threatens to unravel the narrator's sense of imaginative control over that which he has reduced to a text.'[144] I would like to take up the metaphor of the gap, or the blank, which suddenly accelerates the fall into illegibility which the text hints at from its opening lines. The narrator-become-detective relentlessly tracks down the old man to close the gap (physical distance) between them, but this feverish pursuit is fuelled by the great anxiety which the illegibility of the man of the crowd – this gap, this blank page – engenders. The man of the crowd – and the crowd itself – can thus both be construed as blank pages, which the narrator feel compelled to fill with the above-mentioned logorrhoea of descriptive terms (terms which might also apply to physiologies), or as pages so darkened with scribblings and *croisements* of all kinds as to be completely obscured and illegible.

Indeed, the 'detective' part of the tale, despite comprising all the elements of the detective story, does not shed light on the nature of the man, the crowd or the city, but has quite the opposite effect. The text seems to be a gradual descent into literal and metaphorical obscurity. All the potentially significant observations the narrator makes seem to put him on the wrong track, or lead him into interpretative dead ends. The narrator's discourse becomes interspersed with hesitations, which appear like gaps and blanks in his system of interpretation. According to Brand, the detective's analysis starts precisely from these gaps, from these 'deviations from the plane of the ordinary.'[145] Taking the example of Poe's most emblematic detective, Dupin, he explains that

> The *flâneur*[/physiologist], seeking to reduce the city to a set of manageable and predictable types, is always looking for what he has already seen and defined. […] Dupin, on the other hand, asserts that truth can only be discovered by reading the unprecedented and undefined. […] The gaps and ruptures in the *flâneur*'s framework are no longer a source of anxiety. They are, for the detective, the means by which 'reason feels her way in her search for the true.'[146]

As Brand aptly notes, in Poe's 'The Mystery of Marie Rogêt,' Dupin literally analyses the gaps, blind spots and inconsistencies in newspaper accounts of Marie Rogêt's death, but to no avail. In the 'Man of the Crowd,' the narrator/detective also tries to interpret and analyse the

[144] Brand, 'From the *flâneur* to the detective', 221.
[145] Poe, 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', *The Portable Edgar Allan Poe*, 254.
[146] Brand, 'From the *flâneur* to the detective', 233-4.

gaps in the urban text, but similarly, his speculations ultimately turn out to be erroneous. 'The Man of the Crowd' may actually be perceived as the parody of a comforting detective story. It takes us on a convoluted interpretative journey which goes through the motions of the detective hunt, but does not yield any reassuring result. The hunt literally takes the form of a prolonged zigzagging, criss-crossing pursuit across the seemingly boundless metropolis, whose trajectory forms intricate interlacing patterns on the London map. The impression the text gives is one of terrifying fluidity. Interestingly, the narrator's increasing sense of geographic disorientation mirrors his growing confusion concerning the nature of his prey: 'I was surprised, however, to find, upon his having made the circuit of the square, that he turned and retraced his steps. Still more was I astonished to see repeat the same walk several times,' 'I was now utterly amazed at his behaviour,' 'upon the whole, I was at a loss to comprehend the waywardness of his actions.' 'I followed him in the wildest amazement' (MOC, 234-4; 235; 236; 237). The gradation used to reflect his increasing bewilderment as the tale unfolds climaxes in the tale's concluding words:

> '"This old man," I said at length, "is the type and the genius of deep crime. He refuses to be alone. *He is the man of the crowd*. It will be in vain to follow; for I shall learn no more of him, nor of his deeds. The worst heart of the world is a grosser book than the 'Hortulus Animae,'* and perhaps it is but one of the great mercies of God that '*es lässt sich nicht lesen*.'" (MOC, 237)

The circuitous physical and hermeneutic journey, however, has led us into a dead end and yielded no result – the man of the crowd remains a blank. Here, the 'worst heart of the world' is described as a bigger, bulkier[147] book than the slim prayer book intended to teach readers how to cultivate 'the Little Garden of the Soul.' The narrator concludes the tale by equating 'the man of the crowd' – and the human heart – to an absolutely illegible book. His specious conclusion aims at giving us the impression that the mystery has been solved, but it is no more than empty rhetoric. What the narrator admits to is that he cannot make sense of the man of the crowd. By the end of the tale, we have literally come full circle: on a geographic level, the narrator finds himself on the exact same street as at the beginning of the tale, and on an interpretative level, has learnt nothing more about the enigmatic man of the crowd. This spurious sense of resolution and uncanny circular structure thus redoubles our sense of uncertainty and anxiety. The tale is a descent into the abyss of 'The City of Dreadful Night,'

[147] 'gross, *adj*.: Thick, stout, massive, big.' OED.

and enacts an unsolvable mystery. This walk through the city has shattered the narrator's sense of epistemological mastery by showing him that no human being can be read as he had presumed. The process blurring between the old man and the crowd is complete by the end of the tale: the old man, this synecdoche representing the crowd, appropriately vanishes into it. His identity seems to disintegrate into the city which has itself turned into a mysterious entity. Poe's illegible (man of the) crowd seems to contain and physically embody the problems and contradictions of urban modernity.[148] Moreover, as the tale unfolds, the parallels between the man of the crowd and the narrator himself multiply, which is another form of blurring. Poe plays with the conventions of the Romantic double, which reinforces the text's aesthetics of indistinctness. The persistence of ancient texts whose threads become interlaced with new texts complicates the pattern of the diptych and destabilizes the shape of the tale further.

Poe weaves yet another thread of ambiguity into the canvas of the tale, thus adding in another *croisement* which complicates its pattern. The narrator's weavings into and out of the darker corners of the city suggest that other kinds of crossings are at work within the text. Poe's text appears to be the epitome of *loiterature*, which Chambers has explicitly associated with crossings and the trivial:

> Trivial comes to us from the Latin *trivialis*, meaning having the character of a three-way crossing (and of those who frequent three-way crossings). The sense of 'insignificant' that 'trivial' now conveys seems to derive, in part, from an association with the medieval *trivium*, which must have been opposed to the *quadrivium* somewhat as the three-way crossing is opposed to more "normal", and a "straightforward," four-way crossroads. But before it came to mean insignificant, the trivial was associated with people, places, and practices of ill repute, particularly as they involved the body and the satisfaction of its needs, as opposed to the supposedly higher things of the mind and the soul. Three-way crossings weren't places for triumphal arches and noble monuments; what flourished there were taverns and brothels and gambling dens. […] For shady

[148] This reading of Poe's tale – which is the most prevalent amongst critics – was first put forward by Baudelaire and was then taken up by Walter Benjamin and a substantial group of critics. See Dana Brand, 'From the *flâneur* to the detective', Robert H. Byer, 'Mysteries of the City: A Reading of Poe's "The Man of the Crowd,"' in Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen (eds.) *Ideology and Classic American Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), pp. 221–246, and Monica Elbert, '"The Man of the Crowd" and the Man outside the Crowd: Poe's Narrator and the Democratic Reader', *Modern Language Studies*, vol. 21, no. 4 (Autumn, 1991), 16-30.

> characters of various kinds, but especially prostitutes and con men, the three-way crossing was therefore the ideal spot to hang out: it provided cover for their apparent idleness, and at the same time a plentiful supply of likely customers or prospective victims.[149]

Poe's narrator – and his text – perform multiple three-way crossings here. The narrator's mental and physical *flâneries* lead him to cross certain class boundaries, or, in his words, 'descend in the scale of what is termed gentility' (MOC, 232). He seems to find particular enjoyment in describing the lower classes he does not habitually rub shoulder with: 'As the night deepened, so deepened to me the interest of the scene [...] as the late hour brought forth every species of infamy from its den' (MOC, 232-3). As Chambers points out, 'loitering tends to blur the distinctions on which social order depends.'[150] This is very reminiscent of the *Confessions* in which De Quincey keeps the company of outcasts such as Ann and finds pleasure in observing 'the pleasures of the poor.' His liminal status allows him to associate with Charles Lamb's 'London-with-the-many-sins'[151] and to explore a space which is 'Other': 'I used often, on Saturday nights, after I had taken opium, to wander forth, without much regarding the direction or the distance, to all the markets, and other parts of London, to which the poor resort on a Saturday night, for laying out their wages' (C, 47). This type of *flânerie* is akin to what would become known as 'slumming' in the 1880s, the habit of visiting the most deprived areas of Victorian cities. Slumming can be defined as a geographical, moral, and sexual kind of crossing since it was a form of urban tourism sometimes motivated by moral, religious and altruistic reasons, sometimes by curiosity, excitement and thrill. Many slummers were in pursuit of the 'guilty pleasures' associated with the immoral slum dwellers, and slumming led to many cross-class sexual encounters and fellowships.[152] If we turn our attention back to Poe's text, one may read Poe's tale as a form of crossing which is not devoid of sexual connotations. The narrator may be seen as a transgender entity crossing the conventional notions of male or female gender roles, or moving between these. Several critics have rightly underlined the homoerotic overtones of a tale, which, after all, on a diegetic level, recounts the story of a man obsessively pursuing another man. To go back to De Certeau, one might say that the kind of crossing practices performed by Poe's *flâneur* modify and subvert

[149] Ross Chambers, *Loiterature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 7-8.
[150] Chambers, *Loiterature*, 8.
[151] Charles Lamb, Letter to Thomas Manning, November 28, 1800, in Alfred Ainger (ed.), *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, (London: Macmillan & Co., 1888), 161.
[152] For more information on slumming, see Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

the more rigid kind of streetwalking patterns followed by other city practitioners, who form 'two dense and continuous tides of population […] rushing past' him (MOC, 230). The narrator signals his interest in the man of the crowd in an obviously sexually connoted exclamation: 'I felt singularly aroused, startled, fascinated. "How wild a history," I said to myself, "is written within that bosom!" Then came a craving desire to keep the man in view' (MOC, 233). The way the narrator scrutinizes the inside of the man's coat is also highly suggestive:

> His clothes, generally, were filthy and ragged; but as he came, now and then, within the strong glare of a lamp, I perceived that his linen, although dirty, was of beautiful texture; and my vision deceived me, or, through a rent in a closely buttoned and evidently second-handed roquelaire which enveloped him, I caught a glimpse both of a diamond and of a dagger. (MOC, 233-4)

In this erotically charged close-up, the narrator's surveying gaze turns into a 'glimpse,' which conveys an undertone of the furtively observed which may have to do with cruising. As Mark Turner points out, 'cruising is the stuff of fleeting, ephemeral moments not intended to be captured. […] It doesn't remain static, it passes quickly, it's over in the time it takes to shift one's eyes.'[153] The narrator's gaze almost becomes a haptic sense as he describes the texture of the man's 'dirty linen,' which hints at a strong desire for touch. Moreover, the sexual connotations associated with the rent in the closely buttoned coat, the diamond and the dagger all endorse a homoerotic reading of the tale. The narrator's 'craving desire to keep the man in view' might not stem, as he claims, from a desire for knowledge, but rather from a desire for sexual gratification: 'I was […] firmly resolved that we should not part until I had satisfied myself in some measure respecting him' (MOC, 235). Stadler points out that 'here the narrator's epistemological quest slides into, and puns on, the meaning of "satisfying myself" that signifies physical action, sexual climax. Thus the crisis of representation around which the tale is centered works to enable the representation of a sexual act.'[154] The illegibility of the tale might thus be interpreted as a suggestion of homoeroticism, and conversely, these homoerotic connotations also contribute to the overall effect of indecipherability which the text impresses upon the reader. Thus, Poe's queer *flâneur* – and the *flâneur*'s queer readings – blur traditional gender roles and contribute to the tale's overall effect of illegibility. *Flânerie*

[153] Turner, *Backward Glances*, 10.
[154] Stadler, 'Poe and Queer Studies', 21.

opens up a space for a form of transgender crossing of identities which goes hand in hand with an aesthetics of ambiguity.

Interestingly, the function of triviality and queering in adding an element of ambiguity, complexifying a two-way *croisement,* can be observed in those very exchanges that originally caught our interest as part and parcel of the *flâneur*'s makeup. In Dickens's 1859 *A Tale of Two Cities*, Channel crossings and re-crossings allow Sydney Carton to perform different kinds of *croisements* in both capitals. The alternation between Paris and London scenes shows that Dickens favours a model of circulation and even blurring of distinctions between the two cities. The pair formed by Darnay and Carton – who are mirror images and opposites – seems to confirm the plot's reliance on the binary logic reflected by the title. But the text's aesthetics of uncertainty is ultimately performed by a 'trivial' character, a queer *flâneur*, and the third party in the love triangle composed of Lucie Manette, Charles Darnay and Sydney Carton. Sydney Carton troubles the plot of *A Tale of Two Cities* in that he 'assumes too many meanings and is required to connect too many threads of the novel […] he becomes more strained as he becomes more important.'[155] The ambivalence which he brings to bear on the categories of characterization, as he becomes the somewhat inadequate hero of the tale, relies on his function as a 'trivial' wanderer in Paris and London. Several critics have drawn attention to the 'largely tacit recognition by other characters of Carton's queer nobility and, by extension, the tacit acceptance of queer heroism.'[156] Carton's queer *flâneries* through London pave the way for his Paris crossings: 'Many a night he vaguely and unhappily wandered there, when wine had brought no transitory gladness to him; many a dreary daybreak revealed his solitary figure lingering there.'[157] His flâneurial practice of wandering the streets inconspicuously enables him to roam freely through the chartered streets of revolutionary Paris: "'You know my vagabond and restless habits. If I should prowl about the streets a long time, don't be uneasy; I shall reappear in the morning.'"[158] This eventually allows him to set his plan in motion to save Darnay. It is his queerness which endows him with all the qualities he needs to become the hero of the tale, for it has taught him

[155] Albert D. Hutter, 'Nation and Generation in A Tale of Two Cities.' *PMLA*, vol. 93 (1978), 448-62, (p. 456).
[156] Christine L. Krueger, 'The Queer Heroism of a Man of Law in A Tale of Two Cities', *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, issue 8.2 (Summer 2012), 13. <http://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue82/krueger.htm> [accessed 02/05/2013]. See also See Holly Furneaux, *Queer Dickens: Erotics, Families, Masculinities* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2009).
[157] Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* [1859], ed. Andrew Sanders (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 179.
[158] Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, 384-5.

how to be invisible and to play the role of others, as Krueger aptly remarks: 'familiarity with a culture of "posers," queer men posing as straight and as women […] renders Carton expert at countering Barsad's pretense of honesty with a pose of his own—standing before the court without his wig, looking for all the world like Charles Darnay.'[159] When Carton and Darnay exchange identities – one might almost say cross-dress –, Carton becomes the hero of the tale. Moreover, at the end, Syndey's vision lays him to rest between Lucie and her husband: 'I see her and her husband, their course done, lying side by side in their last earthly bed, and I know that each was not more honoured and held sacred in the other's soul, than I was in the souls of both.'[160] Carton's queerness enables him to become the double of Charles Darnay, and, as Krueger points out, to become reproductive. In his final prophetic vision, he sees Lucie's future son and grandson, who will bear his name, 'with a forehead that I know and golden hair, to this place—then fair to look upon, with not a trace of this day's disfigurement—and I hear him tell the child my story."'[161] In this queer ending, which reverses conventional novel closures, the queer hero sees himself enduring through Darnay's descendants and through the very act of storytelling. Carton's multiple crossings thus queer the shape of the novel and highlight the fact that *A Tale of Two Cities* is a text more preoccupied with unsettled in-betweenness than with the polarity its title heralds. In both Poe's and Dickens's texts, it seems that the queer *flâneur*'s crossings complicates patterns and multiply potential meanings and readings.

Thus, the thread (and threat) of illegibility runs throughout the canvas of Poe's tale both links up and blurs the limits between identities. Out of this interlacing emerges the portrait of a protean *flâneur* who is – as he has always been – a *croisement*, a hybrid creation, and whose crossing activities blur the limits between different spaces, genders, genres and texts.

2. Framing the self: the *flâneur* as a *croisement* between the Man of the Crowd and the Man in the Crowd

[159] Krueger, 32.
[160] Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, 465.
[161] Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, 465-6.

As was said earlier, a *croisement* evokes both the ideas of encounter and separation. The crowd is a site where connections are constantly being created and dissolved, and can be perceived as both a place of profound solitude and inescapable multiplicity. This dialectical movement between a sense of connection with others and alienation is at the heart of Poe's tale and is instrumental in defining the narrator's sense of self. The *croisements* with others help the narrator to delineate a stable sense of self but also blur the limits between self and others. I will first try to show how the text develops the idea that the narrator, the man of the crowd and the crowd itself form an interchangeable triad, or, in Parsons' words, a 'three-way mirror.'[162] I will then explore the idea that the *croisements* between these three entities might point to a form of ontological anxiety which will be translated in Baudelaire's poetry. Finally, I will probe the idea that the narrator might be caught up in endless *flânerie* and wandering precisely because he can never (*croiser*) come face to face with the man of the crowd or pin him (or himself) down.

The crowd is defined as a paradoxical space in Poe's tale. The tension between inevitable connection and extreme alienation which the crowd generates is epitomized in the epigraph to the tale: '*ce grand Malheur, de ne pouvoir être seul*.' It suggests that to find and define one's sense of self at the heart of the multitude is impossible. The narrator first defines himself as someone who is outside the crowd. His position behind the pane of glass, as well as his role as physiologist and detective seem to put him at a safe distance from the crowd. However, this sense of separation is soon shown to be illusory. The city generates self-estrangement because the narrator cannot help but be caught up in the pursuit of others. It follows that paradoxically, the sense of loneliness is never more intense than in the crowd. As the narrator points out, one cannot help 'feeling in solitude on account of the very denseness of the company around' (MOC, 230). Poe's tale depicts repeated failures to establish meaningful connections: the old man does not connect with the crowd and the narrator does not connect with the old man. The crowd is perceived as an alienating space in 'The Man of the Crowd.' However, the *croisements* which make up the city also paradoxically engender a sense of connection within the tale. The text establishes a network of correspondences or *croisements* between the crowd, the man of the crowd, and the narrator himself. Indeed, the 'tumultuous sea of human heads' which fills the narrator's mind at the beginning of the story

[162] Deborah L. Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford, New York: OUP, 2003), 23.

is becoming contaminated by his 'increasing confusion,' as the text progresses (MOC, 230; 237) – unless it is the other way round, and the city, this 'pervasive malady,'[163] is beginning to infect him. As the narrator becomes physically immersed in the crowd, he also becomes inextricably linked to the crowd on a psychological level. But the crowd is a paradoxical space. On the one hand, the narrator is repulsed by the crowd, which becomes a space of projection for the anxieties surrounding the narrator's sense of selfhood. On the other hand, the narrator finds himself irrepressibly drawn to this 'immense reservoir of electrical energy.'[164] The sense of infinite connection which stems from the crowd might be viewed as something very positive, as is the case in Baudelaire's comments on the crowd:

> Ainsi l'amoureux de la vie universelle entre dans la foule comme dans un immense réservoir d'électricité. On peut aussi le comparer, lui, à un miroir aussi immense que cette foule; à un kaléidoscope doué de conscience, qui, à chacun de ses mouvements, représente la vie multiple et la grâce mouvante de tous les éléments de la vie. C'est un *moi* insatiable du *non-moi*, qui, à chaque instant, le rend et l'exprime en images plus vivantes que la vie elle-même, toujours instable et fugitive.[165]

The crowd is defined as a space of freedom into which the self may find itself reflected *ad infinitum*. Poe's tale crystallises the dialectical movement between the narrator's separate sense of selfhood and identification with the crowd. Like De Quincey's *Confessions*, it dramatizes the tension that is inherent to the idea of *croisement*: the narrator is both drawn and repulsed by the idea of union of the self with the crowd. He is, to use Baudelaire's expression, 'an ego athirst for the non-ego.'

The text also establishes the man of the crowd as the narrator's double. The two men are indeed uncannily similar. The man of the crowd, for instance, 'refuses to be alone,' but this pressing need to be 'among the throng' only mirrors the narrator's craving desire to keep the man [of the crowd] in view' (MOC, 237; 237; 233). Both men feel the urge to be at 'the

[163] Beaumont and Dart, *Restless Cities*, x.
[164] Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', *OC*, vol. 2, 692. (trans. Mayne, 9.)
[165] Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', *OC*, vol. 2, 692. 'Thus the lover of universal life enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. Or we might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidescope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life. He is an 'I' with an insatiable appetite for the 'non-I', at every instant rendering and explaining it in pictures more living than life itself, which is always unstable and fugitive.' (trans. Mayne, 9-10.)

heart of mighty London' (MOC, 237). Yet, what the tale tells us is that the insoluble mystery of human identity – and of the human heart, which 'does not let itself be read' – is crystallised most potently in the figure of the man of the crowd, as the closing words of the tale remind us: '*es lässt sich nicht lesen*.' What follows is that the uncertainties concerning the man of the crowd's identity only mirror the narrator's own wavering sense of self. As Brand points out, the tale hints at the terrifying sense of emptiness which might arise in the old man, were his perpetual wandering activities stopped short:

> This is the great dilemma of the man of the crowd. He 'refuses to be alone' because his mind has lost the ability to synthetically produce experience. His imagination has been destroyed, overwhelmed by stimuli. In this state of savage torpor, he has become dependent upon 'the application of gross and violent stimulants.' If this external stimulation were to cease, if the old man were to find himself truly lone, he would experience a pure emptiness, a terrifying and intolerable ennui.[166]

These comments about fear of *ennui* could just as easily be applied to the narrator himself, who, when intent on the crowd, feels 'the converse of ennui-moods.' The narrator's 'fatal, irresistible passion' for the man of the crowd, which Baudelaire has underlined,[167] echoes the man of the crowd's own interest in the crowd, which highlights the parallels between them.[168] Thus, the uncanny mirroring effects between the narrator and the old man multiply as the text progresses, so much so that the two figures become almost interchangeable. The simple fact that both characters remain unnamed makes them virtually interchangeable and increases the indeterminateness of their identity.

Poe clearly draws on the figure of the Romantic double to heighten the sense of ontological malaise which pervades the text. The Romantic double, as Clément Rosset[169] explains, points to the subject's sense of ontological anxiety. The creation of the double is an attempt to ward off the 'lack of being' felt by the subject. While the subject perceives himself as a mere shadow whose very existence is uncertain, the double's corporeal existence firmly

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[166] Brand, 'From the *flâneur* to the detective', 222.
[167] 'La curiosité est devenue une passion fatale, irrésistible.' Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', *OC*, vol. 2, 690.
[168] Several critics have emphasized this idea. For Kennedy, the Man of the Crowd's demeanor 'mirrors the narrator's compulsive behavior.' J. Kennedy, 'The Limits of Reason: Poe's Deluded Detectives,' *American Literature*, 47.2 (May 1975), 184-96, 191.
[169] Clément Rosset, *Le Réel et son double* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).

grounds him in reality. The obsession with the figure of the double in Romantic literature is a symptom of the anxiety of not being able to ascertain one's own existence oneself. However, creating a double is nothing but a tragic and temporary escape from this state of ontological anxiety. The false sense of security created by the figure of the double is a trap, and the double inevitably leads the subject to perdition, because choosing the double is choosing an image of oneself rather than oneself. Clément Rosset's comments about the nature of the Romantic double are particularly enlightening with regards to Poe's tale. First of all, the Romantic intertext – along with the numerous intertexts which the text calls forth – brings out the unstable nature of the tale. The shifting form of the tale mirrors and reinforces the uncertain sense of identity which suffuses the text. In Barthes words, the tale's texture is an 'interlacing of codes, formulae and signifiers, in the midst of which the subject places himself and is undone.'[170] Secondly, his observations about the workings of the figure of the Romantic double throw a new light on the narrator's obsession with the man of the crowd. The old man is a subject on whom the narrator can focus his attention, and who possesses a corporeal identity which he finds missing in himself. Seen in this light, the double is no more than a feeble attempt at counterbalancing the subject's 'lack of being.' Auerbach deftly uses the image of the window, which is also a mirror, an instrument of self-reflection as well as vision, to connect the two figures.[171] The man of the crowd thus becomes the narrator's only hope for self-understanding, hence his desperate attempt to keep him in view. In Auerbach's words, having a double to follow 'permits the "I" to construct some structure of cause and effect, a plot, that could help give the narrator some objective sense of himself.'[172] The narrator's obsessive pursuit of the man of the crowd thus clearly hints at an anxious desire to make sense of himself. According to Dryden, the theme of identity is central to the literary double, but becomes more pressing for nineteenth-century subjects, who have to face the dilution of their individuality into the emergent mass of people gathering in expanding metropolis.[173] What is at stake here is self-definition. One might even connect the tale to Doctor Jekyll's moment of self-revelation in Stevenson's novella. As Jekyll looks in the mirror, he comes face to face with Mr. Hyde, 'the evil side of his nature': 'This, too, was

[170] Roland Barthes, 'Theory of the Text', 39.
[171] Auerbach, 'Disfiguring the Perfect Plot', 30.
[172] Auerbach, 'Disfiguring the Perfect Plot', 27.
[173] Linda Dryden, *Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles. Stevenson, Wilde and Wells* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 16.

myself.'[174] However, in Poe's tale, the man in the crowd refuses to recognize the man of the crowd – 'the type and the genius of deep crime' – as his double, and concludes that he is essentially inscrutable, thus preventing the tale from coming to a close. Poe's use of doubling thus fuels the uncanny feeling of ontological undecidability which the concluding words imprint upon us.

This idea of doubling and ontological anxiety curiously resurfaces in Baudelaire's comments about Poe's writing. 'La première fois que j'ai ouvert un livre de lui, j'ai vu, avec épouvante et ravissement, non seulement des sujets rêvés par moi, mais des PHRASES pensées par moi, et écrites par lui vingt ans auparavant.'[175] Baudelaire himself stresses the *croisement* between Poe's writing and his own. Interestingly, Baudelaire's poetry revolves largely around this anxiety surrounding the illegibility of others and of the self. Yves Bonnefoy has pointed out that it is in Poe's writing that Baudelaire first comes across the image of the crowd as a site of ontological anxiety. For Bonnefoy, 'great modern poetry' like Baudelaire's originates in the muting of signs pointing towards transcendence, and this phenomenon first becomes visible in the crowd of great cities: 'L'homme de la foule, c'est l'homme qui révèle l'essence de la foule, et cette essence, c'est le néant.'[176] Poe's and Baudelaire's texts display this sense of ontological anxiety in a very striking way. As Benjamin noted,[177] Baudelaire favoured the image of the mask, which recalls both the man of the crowd, whose 'absolute idiosyncrasy of […] expression' is reminiscent of a mask, and the narrator, whose face is hidden by a handkerchief. A mask gives substance to the self, but it simultaneously conceals, as Baudelaire's famous words on the *flâneur* who 'becomes flesh with the crowd' indicate: 'L'observateur est un prince qui jouit partout de son incognito.'[178] This sentence dramatizes the apprehension that there might be nothing to reveal behind the mask. This is the argument of Richard Pope:

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[174] Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* [1886] (New York: Norton Critical Editions, 2003), 51.

[175] Lettre de Charles Baudelaire à Théophile Thoré du 20 juin 1864 in Charles Baudelaire, *Correspondance*, ed. Claude Pichois, Jean Ziégler, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, Collection 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade', 1973), vol. 2, 386. 'The first time I opened one of his books, I saw with rapture and awe, not only subjects which I had dreamt of, but SENTENCES which I had thought out, written by him, twenty years before.'

[176] Yves Bonnefoy, *Le poète et « le flot mouvant des multitudes »* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2003), 31. 'The Man of the crowd is the man who reveals the essence of the crowd, and this essence is nothingness.'

[177] CB, 97-8. '*Flâneur*, apache, dandy and ragpicker were so many roles to [Baudelaire …]. Behind the masks which he used up, the poet in Baudelaire preserved his incognito.'

[178] Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', *OC*, vol. 2, 691-2. 'The spectator is a *prince* who everywhere rejoices in his incognito.' (trans. Mayne, 9.)

> Is it possible, however, there was nothing to reveal, that in the place of his incognito lurked something like a black hole? […] Perhaps the acts, the performances, were all there were, with nothing behind the mask, or, put better, perhaps the mask was the persona, the person, or the 'personality' evoked by Benjamin. The sensation of there being something behind the mask is, after all, but the result of the fantasies we project. And perhaps—peut-être—the 'person' who acknowledged this, who testified to this, would be a *flâneur*.[179]

What Pope's observation shows is that the intertextual *croisements* which can be found in Baudelaire's poetry revive, build on and also rework the intuition of ontological nothingness which underlies Poe's depiction of urban walking. It also demonstrates that what the *flâneur* ultimately seeks to define through his observation of others is himself. The dialectic of self-definition and definition from others – from the inside and from the outside – is central to both writers' representation of *flânerie*.

The narrator's relentless pursuit of the man of the crowd highlights a paradox. On the one hand, it points to the alienating subjectivity he is seeking to escape. On the other hand, if the narrator cannot stop *speculating* about the man of the crowd, it is because what is at stake is self-definition. As Auerbach points out, 'the narrative shows that we can never close the gap between self and other opened up by the sudden appearance of the double.'[180] Since the self cannot be pinned down, the narrative implies that the *flâneur*/narrator/detective might be condemned to follow this double indefinitely. The idea of the chase, paradoxically, implies that there will never be any *croisement* or encounter with the double, which means there will never be any moment of anagnorisis. The attempt at self-definition can only be achieved by confronting the other, and what is striking in the text is that despite the presence of the crowd, the text never describes any real *face à face*. The crowd-members, 'if jostled, […] bowed profusely to the jostlers, and appear overwhelmed with confusion' (MOC, 230), while the narrator never actually confronts the man of the crowd. 'I grew wearied unto death, and, stopping fully in front of the wanderer, gazed at him steadfastly in the face. He noticed me not, but resumed his solemn walk, while I, ceasing to follow, remained absorbed in contemplation' (MOC, 237). The narrator comes face to face with the man of the crowd, but

[179] Richard Pope, 'The Jouissance of the *Flâneur*: Rewriting Baudelaire and Modernity', *Space and Culture*, 13, 1 (2010), 4-16, (p. 6).
[180] Auerbach, 'Disfiguring the Perfect Plot', 31.

does not meet his gaze – *leur regard ne se croise pas*. This absence of *croisement* means the self cannot be framed, the narrator cannot catch any glimpse of his reflection. The narrator who spends his time typecasting others, paradoxically, cannot be pinned down. His endless drifting through the city has no reason to stop, since the subject cannot be grasped. Indeed, his double's resuming of 'his solemn walk' seems to indicate that the *flâneur*/narrator is condemned to eternal wandering. The tale's lack of closure, which the narrator's empty rhetoric cannot disguise, might also hint at the fact that the very act of *flânerie* – like that of the chase – is an act of endless deferral. The *flâneur* might thus be condemned to cross and re-cross the way repeatedly, in a movement which mimics his own attempts at interpretation and re-interpretation, and which might also mirror the readers' attempts to decipher this enigmatic tale.

3. Framing interpretation: *croisement*, metafiction and metatextuality

In this section, I will argue that hermeneutics is at the heart of Poe's tale of *flânerie*. One cannot help but notice the *croisements* or mirroring effects between the narrator's and the reader's experience of deciphering the urban text. I will first examine how the text constantly draws attention to its own mechanisms. *Flânerie* can be seen as a metafictional device which leads the reader to question the nature of fiction and story-telling itself. I will then explore the idea that the *flâneur*, whose role is to frame the experience of the city for readers, might be the embodiment of a move towards embedded hermeneutic discourses. Indeed, ever since its publication, the tale has generated a constant stream of critical and metatextual discourses. 'The Man of the Crowd' seems to bring to light the idea that the aesthetics of *flânerie* is that of an exponential multiplication of frames and framing devices. These multiple, crisscrossing *flâneurial* discourses form a lens through which one may gaze at the city. It might be that these multiple frames distort its object beyond recognition. On the other hand, perhaps the city and the self may only be grasped through distortions, in which case the prism of the *flâneurial* gaze may enable us to grasp and apprehend them better. We might thus see the *flâneur* as a crosser who provide critics with a method to apprehend modernity. This will lead me to consider him as a locus for *croisement*, a figure who both receives and refracts impressions, passes them on and transforms them – and endures precisely for this reason. This relates to the idea that the *flâneur* is, in the words of Virginia Woolf, 'a central oyster of

perceptiveness, an enormous eye.'[181] His gaze (enormous eye) and subjectivity (this 'enormous I') provide us with a lens and a method to apprehend urban modernity.

I would first like to show how Poe's text constantly draws our attention to the idea of reading and deciphering. The text contains numerous metafictional references which give prominence to the hermeneutic process. The narrator regularly draws parallels between his reading activities and his readers,' as he does most explicitly in the following example: 'With a cigar in my mouth and a newspaper in my lap, I had been amusing myself for the greater part of the afternoon, […] in poring over advertisements' (MOC, 229). This description playfully mirrors Poe's readers' situation as they discover the tale for the first time *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*. The text thus highlights its fictional status, but also makes a point of *re-presenting* the hermeneutic process on which the narrator/reader has embarked. When the old man appears in the midst of the crowd, the shift in the narrator's physical position mirrors the way readers have to adapt to his new hermeneutic method. As Auerbach suggests, 'to see the wanderer clearly, both narrator and reader must now interpret him, a risky enterprise that draws the first-person speaker out into the streets.'[182] This brings us back to the idea of the *flâneur* as an 'enormous eye' which can accommodate – change its own focal length or distance – to maintain a clear image. As stated before, accommodation designates the eye's ability to focus on objects at different distances, and involves changes in shape or position. This is literally what the *flâneur*/narrator does here – he is forced to change positions to keep the old man in sight. The reader too must go through this process of hermeneutic accommodation to try to make out the man of the crowd. However, the old man's unpredictable movements thwart the narrator's attempts – and our own – to make sense of the impenetrable mystery which he embodies. The narrator's puzzlement mirrors our own in the face of innumerable details which we cannot assimilate or make head or tail of. The text forces the reader to follow the narrator on his interpretative quest and to adopt the same hermeneutic stance. Interestingly, after a while, this process turns against the narrator. His suspicions about the man of the crowd are such that readers, in turn, are lead to suspect him:

> It becomes apparent that the narrator has projected his sense of his own (literally) un-utterable wickedness upon the Man of the Crowd, who, for any evidence we are given about him, may be no more than the quite innocent and wholly terrified

[181] Woolf, 'Street Haunting', 178.
[182] Auerbach, 'Disfiguring the Perfect Plot', 28.

> victim of the narrator's sinisterly silent, masked, seemingly motiveless pursuit. We are to 'refract the detective's investigation from the mystery outside to the mystery inside his own person.[183]

At this stage, the hermeneutic cycle has come full circle, since the tale's inquisitive *flâneur* has turned the readers into *flâneurs* who decipher and interpret the signs they come across. The ending of the text reinforces this impression since it invites us to take over the narrator's hermeneutic quest from him, as Merivale points out: 'we must read beyond the ending: to take over, on behalf of the narrator, the function of supplying the very point that 'does not allow itself to be read' at and as the ending.'[184] The final image of the illegible, 'gross' book of the human heart is indeed an invitation to read beyond the ending of the tale. The striking image of an endlessly proliferating catalogue of evils is a tantalizing inducement to read on, to carry on attempting to decipher 'The Man of the Crowd.' This image of illegibility brings us back to the beginning of the tale and to the image of the narrator avidly trying to read the crowd comprehensively. The text is a perfect vicious circle, since by the end of the tale, readers are contaminated by the narrator's pervasive malady, by his reading fever. In the end, the text yields no answer, but encourages us to continue on the hermeneutic journey which we as readers have started on alongside the *flâneur*. The figure of the *flâneur* thus leads us astray, and we experience aesthetic and intellectual pleasure in wandering between the different intertextual and hermeneutic layers of the tale. Indeed, Poe's text constantly seeks to involve us in the hermeneutic process which shapes the text – it forces us to 'cross and re-cross the way repeatedly.' The *flâneur* is thus a crosser who leads the reader to perform multiple *croisements* between his own reading experience and that of the *flâneur*. It is used as a metafictional device which makes the reader question the nature of the discourse he is being subjected to.

The presence of the *flâneur* and the discourses which develop around him create a powerful effect of framing. The text frames the narrator sitting at a window; the narrator's gaze frames the crowd and the man of the crowd in an attempt to frame his own self. By observing the man of the crowd through the narrator's eye, the readers, in turn, frame the narrator. These involved *croisements* between different frames complicate the reading

[183] Patricia Merivale, 'Gumshoe Gothics; Poe's The Man of the Crowd and His Followers,' in Patricia Merivale, Susan Elizabeth Sweeney (eds.), *Detecting Texts: The Metaphysical Detective Story from Poe to Postmodernism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), pp. 101–116, (p. 106-7).
[184] Merivale, 'Gumshoe Gothics', 107.

process. In 'The Man of the Crowd,' we move from the conventional figure of the wanderer to that of a narrator who offers us multiple perspectives on the city. Poe seems to suggest that 'quest-romances, histories of the soul, can no longer be simply recited but must be compulsively framed and interpreted by another.'[185] To be able to apprehend modernity, one must be able to see the different perspectives used in the attempt to penetrate it. The multiplication of framing devices in Poe's tale exemplify how the aesthetics of *flânerie* functions, develops, and persists. The framing processes which are at work in 'The Man of the Crowd' are carried on, by and through other flâneurial texts.

Indeed, the metatextual and intertextual discourses which have developed around the *flâneur* ever since he appeared on the literary scene can be seen as framing devices which both modify and perpetuate the aesthetics of *flânerie*. Baudelaire himself underlined the framing process at work within Poe's tale by comparing it to a painting: 'Vous souvenez-vous d'un tableau (en vérité, c'est un tableau !) écrit par la plus puissante plume de cette époque, et qui a pour titre l'Homme des foules?'[186] This remark from 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne' opens Baudelaire's own analysis of the text, which has itself framed subsequent interpretations of the tale. Baudelaire thus inaugurated a critical tradition which seems to prove that Poe's text urges readers to read – and write – beyond the end of the text. Baudelaire commented both directly and indirectly on 'The Man of the Crowd,' which finds itself refracted in many poems in *Le Spleen de Paris*. The poem 'Les Foules'[187] contains the most direct references to Poe's text. The same tensions inform both texts, but what was hinted at in Poe's text is spelt out with unprecedented clarity in Baudelaire's poem. For Baudelaire, multitude and solitude are inextricably linked in a crowd, and event become identical, interchangeable terms: 'Multitude, solitude: termes égaux et convertibles pour le poète actif et fécond.'[188] Baudelaire's *flâneur*, like Poe's, displays his 'love of masks and masquerading,' which lets him enjoy 'the incomparable privilege of being able to be himself or someone else, as he chooses.' The experience of the crowd in 'Les Foules,' however, is described as more ambivalent than in 'The Man of the Crowd.' On the one hand, the communion with the crowd

[185] Auerbach, 'Disfiguring the Perfect Plot', 31.
[186] Baudelaire, 'Le Peintre de la vie moderne', *OC*, vol. 2, 689. 'Do you remember a picture (it really is a picture!), painted – or rather written – by the most powerful pen of our age, and entitled *The Man of the Crowd*?' (trans. Mayne, 7.)
[187] Baudelaire, 'Les Foules', *Le Spleen de Paris*, *OC*, vol. 1, 339.
[188] Baudelaire, 'Les Foules', *Le Spleen de Paris*, *OC*, I, 339. 'Multitude, solitude: identical terms, and interchangeable by the active and fertile poet.' (*Paris Spleen*, trans. Louise Varese (New York: New Directions, 1970), 20.)

is described as a jubilant experience producing 'a singular intoxication.' This delight in the debauch of vitality of the crowd seems to be a *croisement* with the *Confessions*. De Quincey's status as a liminal, detached wanderer who can mingle with the crowd and share their experience is perceived as exhilarating. Baudelaire's words in 'Les Foules' condense what De Quincey describes – merging with the crowd is 'an ineffable orgy, [a] divine prostitution of the soul giving itself entire.' On the other hand, the anxiety about the self which permeates Poe's text also finds its way into Baudelaire's poem, when for example the *flâneur* is compared to 'those wandering souls who go looking for a body.' This ghostly image, which encapsulates the idea of ontological anxiety, could apply to both Poe's narrator and to his double, the Man of the Crowd. Poe's influence can be detected in other poems. 'Les fenêtres' inverts Poe's narrator's perspective, as we are made to peer at the figure of an old woman through a closed window from the outside. However, the concerns underlying the poem are similar, and revolve around the problem of deciphering of the other, the projection of the self onto another, and the need to live outside oneself: 'Qu'importe ce que peut être la réalité placée hors de moi, si elle m'a aidé à vivre, à sentir que je suis et ce que je suis?'[189] To take one last example, 'Le Cygne' gives us an image of the melancholy poet/*flâneur* walking through the streets of Paris, and for whom 'all become an allegory' ('tout pour moi devient allégorie'[190]). This verse encapsulates the process which is already at work in Poe's text. The *flâneur* perceives the city as a place in which everything points to something beyond itself – everything is a sign. The poet is depicted as a *flâneur* who is condemned to wander the streets of the 'Unreal city' on a perpetual hermeneutic journey.[191] Thus, Baudelaire's critical and

[189] Baudelaire, 'Les Fenêtres', *Le Spleen de Paris*, *OC*, I, 339. 'But what does it matter what reality is outside myself, so long as it has helped me to live, to feel that I am, and what I am?' (*Paris Spleen*, trans. Louise Varese, 77.)

[190] Baudelaire, 'Le Cygne', *Les Fleurs du mal*, *OC*, I, 85. 'All become for me an allegory.'

[191] See Stierle's comments on this poem: 'Ce flâneur du Paris du second empire est sous l'emprise d'une conscience nouvelle du tout de la ville, qui absorbe pour ainsi dire le détail particulier et en fait un signe, un renvoi allégorique au pouvoir duquel s'abandonne le flâneur devenu méditatif. En devenant signe allégorique, l'élément présent se divise en lui-même, est tout à la fois présence et absence, positivité et négativité, occultation et signe de l'occulté. Ainsi toute manifestation devient-elle irréelle et étrange, et constitue-t-elle dans son étrangeté même un emblème double de la ville devenue étrangère autant que du moi devenu étranger. Le flâneur devient le lecteur dans la ville, qui cherche à prendre conscience de ce qui dépasse fondamentalement la conscience.' (Karlheinz Stierle, *La Capitale des signes. Paris et son discours*, trad. Marianne Rocher-Jacquin (Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2001), 128.) 'This Second-Empire *flâneur* acquires a new consciousness of the city as a whole. This city absorbs the particular detail to turn it into a sign, and the meditative *flâneur* gives in to this allegorical method. By becoming an allegorical sign, the detail becomes divided and is both present and absent, positive and negative, concealed and a sign pointing towards what has been concealed. Every sign thus becomes strange and unreal, and its very strangeness underlines the newly-acquired strangeness of both the city and the self. The *flâneur* becomes the urban reader who seeks to become aware of what fundamentally exceeds consciousness.'

poetic production reflects and refracts the aesthetics of *croisement* which characterizes *flânerie*, and which partly finds its roots in London. One might say that he persists through the century and beyond by weaving an immense web of metatextual and intertextual *croisements* which both connect and disconnect him to these other texts. To pick up on Barthes's metaphor of *croisements* and weaving, one might say that the *flânerie* endures because it functions like a 'hyphology,' ('"hyphos" is the fabric, the veil, and the spider's web').[192] It draws a veil over its earlier forms while simultaneously drawing on the threads which constitute them.

This aesthetics of *flânerie*, with its multiple *croisements* and framing effects, is carried on beyond Poe's Baudelaire's texts both in literature and in the critical discourse. Walter Benjamin's discourse on the *flâneur* is largely based on his reading of Baudelaire's reading of Poe's tale. Thus, the hermeneutic spiral started by Poe's narrator carries on. For Benjamin, the 'unknown man is the *flâneur*. That is how Baudelaire interpreted him when, in his essay on Guys, he called the *flâneur* "l'homme des foules"' (CB, 48). Several critics[193] have commented on the fact that Benjamin misreads Baudelaire's reading of Poe, which perpetuates the hermeneutic cycle. It seems that the poetics of *flânerie* multiplies framing devices, as if the urban experience could only be apprehended by being framed and infinitely refracted in other texts. The numerous *croisements* of perspectives which the *flâneur* brings about thus sets the hermeneutic process in motion.

I would now like to examine the effects of the *croisements* which make up the *flâneur* and which the *flâneur* performs. Arguably, the multiplication of framing devices distorts the city – and the self – beyond recognition. In 'The Man of the Crowd,' we are gazing at a narrator gazing at a man in the crowd who is gazing at the crowd himself. These multiple gazes and framing devices might be seen as parts of a confusing mirror-maze which alters our vision. However, one might argue that it is only by distorting the object under observation that one can grasp and appropriate it. After all, physiologically, the eye sees by bending the rays of light coming from the object being observed to focus them. The rays of light coming from the

[192] Barthes, 'Théorie du texte.' 'L'amateur de néologismes pourrait donc définir la théorie du texte comme une "hyphologie" (hyphos, c'est le tissu, le voile et la toile d'araignée).' 'A lover of neologisms might therefore define the theory of text as a 'hyphology', ('hyphos' is the fabric, the veil, and the spider's web).' (Barthes, 'Theory of the Text' in Young, *Untying the Text*, 39.)

[193] See John Rignall, *Realist Fiction and the Strolling Spectator* (London, New York: Routledge, 1992), and Martina Lauster, 'Walter Benjamin's Myth of the "Flâneur"', *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 102, no. 1 (Jan., 2007), 139-156.

object crisscross in the eye and images are inverted on their way to the retina at the back of the eye. Our brain then processes and reconfigures this upside-down image. Seen in this light, the process of refraction which the *flâneur* (this 'enormous eye') provides seems essential to help grasp the city – and the self – better. Auerbach sees this process of distortion as essential to apprehend the self in 'the Man of the Crowd:' 'Just as the self maintains personal identity by resisting unity, so must Poe's plotting resist divine symmetry by exposing the creaky narrative machinery it pretends to conceal. […] The need to admit the artifice of plotting becomes the force driving the expression of the self.'[194] The homodiegetic narrative voice exposes its flaws, and warns us that is it is not to be trusted. Poe's text, by showing us perspectives which nest imperfectly with each other, sheds light on the condition of the self in the modern city. The metatextual and critical discourse which Poe's text and the *flâneur* engender have the same effect – they multiply framing effects, intersect and thereby shift our perspective and throw new light on our understanding of modernity. Thus, the *croisements* and framing effects brought about by the *flâneur* – and of which he is made – both confound and enlighten us, and it is precisely for this reason that the *flâneur* sets the hermeneutic process into motion.

Finally, I would like to argue that the aesthetics of *croisement* which underlies the construction of the *flâneur* provides us with a method for deciphering urban selfhood and modernity, which might be why the *flâneur* has remained at the centre of the literary and critical discourse. As Werner rightly points out, 'the *flâneur*, like so many of Poe's own fictional creations, has refused to die or stay buried.'[195] Poe's *flâneur* provides us with a blueprint of a critical method for reading urban modernity. He chooses to be both (or neither) inside and outside the crowd to attempt to apprehend it. In Werner's words, 'the most effective route to perceiving the 'inner' truth of an event, or a person's 'inner' secrets, is not a direct or linear trajectory 'inward,' but an oscillating zig-zag, and in-and-out movement that blurs and problematizes this mutually constitutive opposition of "inner" to "outer."'[196] To borrow Benjamin's expression, 'the *flâneur* stands on the threshold – of the metropolis as of the middle class' (AP, 10). His liminal position allows him to move between identification and detachment, between physiology and detection, between different ways of seeing. Several

[194] Auerbach, 'Disfiguring the Perfect Plot', 38.
[195] Werner, *American Flâneur*, 26.
[196] Werner, *American Flâneur*, 110.

critics have indeed suggested that 'the *flâneur* helped determine Walter Benjamin's own practice of "reading" the traces of social relations in the material reality of the nineteenth century.'[197] I would like to argue that the idea of the *flâneur* as both a crosser and a concept composed of crisscrossing influences is helpful to decipher Benjamin's method in the *Arcades Project*. Benjamin's *Arcades Project* can be seen as a monumental work of *flânerie* and *croisement*, a convoluted montage of material which crisscrosses thanks to a system of footnotes and cross-references between different fragements of text and sections or 'convolutes.' The excessive amount of choice offers no logical path through, no rational decision making process for the reader. Like the *Confessions*, the *Arcades Project* is a rhizomic maze through which we have to make our own way. It is an extraordinarily rich text which doesn't indicate how it should be read, and which flaunts montage as one of its structuring principles: 'This work has to develop to the highest degree the art of citing without quotation marks. Its theory is intimately related to that of montage (AP, [N1, 10], 458).' 'A mode of *flânerie* is demanded to navigate the *Arcades Project*. The reader is required to wander through this labyrinthine montage to understand it. He must perform *croisements* between its different sections and convolutes, and is required to both create connections and sever them. Through these many *croisements* between different fragments of texts, the *flâneur* might 'discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event' (AP [N2, 6], 461). The *flâneur*, then, can be perceived as someone who can make us see what Benjamin called 'constellations.' The *flâneur*/historian has the ability to make out the lines which make up constellations where others cannot distinguish them. Under his gaze, 'what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation' (AP [N2a, 3], 462). Lloyd Spencer has commented on Benjamin's use of the word constellation, which, for him, 'expresses in a precise and evocative way an aspect of a new kind of thinking about history': 'A constellation is made up of some stars that are nearer, others further away. It is only from our perspective, that of the here (and now), that they appear to take on a significant configuration.'[198] One might say, then, that The *Arcades Project* is organised around a system of *croisements* and relations, and that it might be perceived as a constellation itself. The text is composed of a multitude of quotations, extracts, asides, footnotes and aphorisms. They appear in the book in linear sequence, but they produce meaning through relations of cross-references

[197] Werner, *American Flâneur*, 22. See also David Frisby, 'The *flâneur* in social theory' in Keith Tester, (ed.), *The Flâneur* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 81–110.
[198] Lloyd Spencer, 'On Certain Difficulties with the Translation of "On The Concept Of History,"' 2000. <http://www.tasc.ac.uk/depart/media/staff/ls/WBenjamin/TranslWB.html> [accessed 10/12/2012]

and echoes which resonate across the whole book, shedding light on each other in a dynamic and complex way. One fragment illuminates another; one 'convolute' throws light on another section. Conversely, no single extract or 'convolute' can reveal its meaning unless put in relation with the whole. All these fragments and commentaries might then be perceived as intersecting and criss-crossing at a thousand different angles, coming together to form new constellations with every different reading, setting up vibrations across different epochs and thus 'cracking open […] natural teleology' (AP [W7, 4], 631). This architecture has, for Benjamin, 'the structure of awakening' (AP [K1, 3], 389). Benjamin's text is like a constellation, and the historian 'like some watcher of the skies,'[199] wandering through nineteenth-century texts like the *flâneur* through the city, or the reader of the *Arcades Project* through Benjamin's maze-like text, making connections, disconnections and reconnections – or *croisements* – which might illuminate the future. Moreover, Benjamin developed what might be defined as a flâneurial architecture of passage in the *Arcades Project*, a 'complex thirty-two character hyperlinking system […] in order to create subterranean passageways or short-cuts between passages in his collection that were thematically related.'[200] This flâneurial method, interestingly, resembles the way De Certeau describes walking: it 'selects and fragments the space traversed; it skips over links and whole parts that it omits. From this point of view, every walk constantly leaps, or skips like a child, hopping on one foot.'[201] The *flâneurial* acquisition of knowledge is a never-ending process based not on the straight line but on the constellation principle. *Flânerie* seems to have informed Benjamin's approach to collecting and organising historical data, and might thus also be a way into Benjamin's maze-like *Arcades Project*. Whilst Benjamin shaped our current understanding of the *flâneur*, it seems that the *flâneur*, too, exerted his influence on Benjamin.

Flânerie provides a method for observation, but also for the production of text. This is the argument of David Frisby, who points out that the *flâneur* may 'not merely be an observer or even a decipherer, the *flâneur* can also be a producer, a producer of literary texts, […] a producer of illustrative texts (including painting) a producer of narratives and reports, a

[199] John Keats, *The Complete Poetical Works and Letters of John Keats* (Houghton: Mifflin and Company, 1899), 9.
[200] H. Marcelle Crickenberger, *"The Structure of Awakening": Walter Benjamin and Progressive Scholarship in New Media* (2007), <http://www.thelemming.com/lemming/dissertation-web/home/arcades.html> [accessed 12/02/2013]
[201] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 101.

producer of journalistic texts, a producer of sociological texts.'[202] This idea brings to mind the image of the *flâneur* as a site of *croisement*. The *flâneur* might be Protean and adapt so well because he is a site of *croisement* of different influences, a figure who receives, grasps, and collects impressions from his walks through the city, but also reflects (on) them, refracts them, and passes them on. From the idea of one person and one gaze meandering through the city, we move towards the idea of the *flâneur* as an entity which absorbs and transmits impressions – 'an enormous eye.' One might see him as the embodiment of mediation, and one might even perhaps compare the *flâneur* to the telegraph, and see him as a site of *croisement*, or crossroads, a site of both dispersion and meeting.

In this section, I have argued that the Baudelairean word *croisement* may prove a useful heuristic device in order to understand how the *flâneur* evolved. It combines spatial, social and textual connotations and is thus deeply relevant to the story of *flânerie*, which starts at street level, in the crowd, and gets displaced into the pages of newspapers, novels, poems and critical texts. This Protean, hybrid figure has survived and flourished thus far precisely because it constantly undergoes mutations and persists through these different types of *croisements*. The *flâneur*'s ability to occupy different kinds of spaces means he can come into contact with the 'many myriads of human faces' (C, 34) which make up the city, blend into the crowd and take on different masks. His capacity to adopt and adapt to changes means that he travels across the Channel – and now continents – with ease, and conversely, the fact that he constantly crosses and re-crosses places and texts reinforces his polymorphous nature. The *flâneur*'s persistent recurrence in our literary and critical topography today shows that it is still very potent tool to help us understand modernity and the discourses we are enmeshed with.

[202] David Frisby, 'The *flâneur* in social theory,' 82.

Conclusion

The focus of this thesis has been to explore the reasons for the *flâneur*'s remarkable persistence throughout and beyond the nineteenth century. The purpose of chapter 1 was to examine the reasons behind the indecipherability of this elusive figure. Firstly, the *flâneur*'s hybridity seems to stem from the landscape of constant cross-cultural pollination in which he was born; he emerged out of crossings between French and British print culture, and is therefore himself a cross between a multitude of Parisian and London scopic figures who preceded him. This composite nature accounts for the *flâneur*'s remarkable ability to take on different shapes and adapt to new contexts throughout the nineteenth century. From his beginnings as a caricature in the French press, through to a 'type' in the physiologies of the 1830s and 1840s, to a literary emblem of alienation, and on to the myriad forms he adopted in the twentieth century, the *flâneur* has developed into a fertile critical concept.

Moving on from his origins to the nature of his gaze, Chapter 2 introduces the figure of the omniscient devil Asmodeus, a prevalent shape-shifting character in the eighteenth-century urban imagination. It was Asmodeus who first watched the city from the rooftops, while it was the *flâneur* who began to walk the streets below a century later. For a time, these two figures surveyed the city from their parallel perspectives. However, over time, the devil faded into the background and the *flâneur* inherited the latter's powers of observation as he slowly took centre stage. What is striking about this process of gradual intertwining is that its progress can be traced on both sides of the Channel. The *flâneur* progressively adopted the scopic powers of the polymorphous Asmodeus while retaining his everyday appearance, cloaked in the anonymity of the nondescript passerby. His enduring appeal might lie in the construction of his personality since the tongue-in-cheek and mischievous qualities of the devil became part of his makeup, turning him into a particularly engaging figure in popular consciousness. This adaptability and profoundly protean nature account for his persistence and lasting power of attraction. What this chapter reveals, through the study of these intertwined figures, is that their amalgamation creates an 'eye' which constantly accommodates (makes room for) and accommodates *to* the urban landscape. This flâneurial eye becomes an important prism through which the boundaries of visuality are either reinforced or displaced.

In a nineteenth-century context of growing mediation in the relation between the city dweller and his surroundings, the identification of the *flâneur* to an 'eye' positions him as an agent who both *perceives* and *interprets* the urban space. Chapter 3 therefore examines the *flâneur*'s contribution to this mapping out of increasingly unreadable cities and studies the evolution of his gaze within the context of rapidly emerging technologies of seeing. The development of sketches and panoramas, two attempts at representing and making sense of the city, provides us with an insight into the ambition embodied by the *flâneur*, and also enables us to understand how his gaze operates. What is interesting about sketches and panoramas is that in trying to capture the continuous flow of urban life and to make it available to a wide audience, these techniques of representation soon turn into technologies of seeing. They engaged with and eventually absorbed and performed the sense of movement and instability inherent in the city. In turn, this malleability itself was inscribed within their spectators' perceptive categories. This dialectical relation between the cityscape and its representations mirrors the *flâneur*'s role as medium: the *flâneur* transcribes the reality of a complex and expanding cityscape and redefines the boundaries of our perception in the process. The *flâneur*'s primary association with the world of print and literature also works as a reminder that visual perception must be envisaged as the product of a constant dialogue between visual representation and discourse. The *telling* of the urban space by the wandering character picks up on the complementarity of text and image in the makeup of the sketch, and on the verbal response elicited in the shared experience of discovering a panoramic view. Verbal and visual regimes are shown to work hand in hand to reconfigure our 'ways of seeing.'

The fourth chapter started with the reminder that the *flâneur*'s experience of the city is not that of a disembodied eye, but implies the constant progression of a bodily subject through streets and across bridges and busy arteries. It stressed the need to re-inscribe the flâneurial gaze within an economy of the senses. Indeed, the *flâneur*'s sense of the city sights cannot be comprehended outside the smells, noises and kinetic sensations involved in his urban explorations. Phenomenological tools allow us to study how the interactions of all of the *flâneur*'s senses shape the *flâneur*'s gaze – or create the flâneurial 'eye' and 'I.' London and Paris offer us examples of *flâneurs* – embodied subjects – whose bodies direct their movements in and out of attention. This process of fleshing out turns the flat character from the physiologies into a full subject; the *flâneur*'s sense of self is created through physical

engagement with a 'structure of feeling'[1] within the city space, and through the series of interactions – encounters, connections and disconnections – which make up the urban experience. Moreover, the *flâneur*'s confrontation and collisions with other moving bodies and sentient beings opens up a space between different viewpoints, and creates a shift in his own perspective. The critical distance he gains in the process makes him an exemplary practitioner of heuristics, a model for the reader to fashion his own processes of interpretation. The embodied experience of passage and of crossing thus builds up the *flâneur*'s critical sense of urban experience.

Chapter 5 takes the idea of crossing at its starting point to perform a case study of the relations between De Quincey's, Poe's, and Baudelaire's flâneurial texts. The chapter uses the kaleidoscopic lens of the Baudelairean term *croisement* to re-examine the trope of urban exploration. This heuristic device casts these writers' triangular relations in a new light. The word's spatial, social and textual connotations makes it relevant to the history of *flânerie* which starts at street level, in the crowd, and then moves into the pages of newspapers, novels, poems and critical texts. The chapter examines how the *flâneur* is a crossing figure whose work is one of perpetual *croisement* which is already at work in De Quincey's writing. It may seem that by using a Baudelairean word to reread the story of *flânerie*, I am looking at the *flâneur* through the modernist lens, but the Baudelairean word *croisement* actually harks back to the origins of the figure which I defined in chapter 1 as one of crossings and crossovers. Instead, the aesthetics of *croisement* which underlies the experience of walking in the *Confessions* – and indeed that of the cosmopolitan *flâneur* – surfaces belatedly in Baudelaire's writing. Once more, the thesis points to a remarkable flexibility by exploring the multiple directions in which he develops through the prism of the term *croisement*. The ability to adopt and adapt to changes means that he has flourished since he first started walking the streets of European capitals. His omnipresence in today's literary and critical topography shows that he still provides a potent tool to decipher our contemporary world and the discourses which fashion us.

Flânerie as a critical practice

[1] See Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto & Press, 1983)

To conclude, I would like to examine how critical works took up the idea of *flânerie* to explore the ways in which loitering practices help in searching for and producing meaning. This was precisely Ross Chambers' purpose in *Loiterature* (1999), whose preface clearly states his allegiance to a form of *flânerie*:

> The ordering of chapters in this book is not random, and the volume is intended to have a greater degree of coherence than would be suggested, for instance, by the idea of a 'collection of essays.' At the same time, the argument I pursue is *not obsessively linear*. Relations between different chapters tend to be *oblique*, *glancing*, and *digressive*; and the relatively *loose* organization of the whole leaves plenty of room for the reader to *inhabit* the volume a bit like a hermit crab in the shell I provide, *filling in gaps* and *making connections* wherever that seems desirable. Each chapter […] can be read independently of the others, although none is really complete in itself. No single chapter is indispensable, offering a uniquely crucial statement concerning loiterature or a privileged overview of the topic. It follows that the book can be read selectively and that readers are *free to invent and follow* sequential orderings of chapters quite different from the one foreshadowed in the table of content.[2] (My italics)

The 'loose organization' of *Loiterature* is reminiscent of the structure of Benjamin's *Arcades Project*. However, the fragmentary and unfinished structure of *The Arcades Project* was not an informing principle of Benjamin's project. It was rather the result of his inability to complete his task, due to the tragic circumstances which led to his death. In *Loiterature*, Chambers puts incompleteness, openness and indirection at the heart of his project. He takes up the motif of the *flâneur*'s loitering practices and uses it as a running metaphor for his writing process. I would like to develop several aspects which Chambers touches upon in his foreword, and which are connected to current critical practices.

The idea of *loiterature* starts from the recognition that any critical viewpoint is necessarily partial and fragmented. By denouncing the utopia of ever having 'a privileged overview of the topic,' Chambers picks up on the flâneurial qualification of the Asmodean, all-encompassing view.[3] In looking for a truer perspective, a critic might be advised to aim

[2] Ross Chambers, *Loiterature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), xiii.
[3] David Lodge's comic novel *Changing Places* ridicules this critical ambition to have 'a privileged overview of' any topic. The novel paints a satirical portrait of Morris Zapp, the academic whose aim is to 'say absolutely

not for a systematic or comprehensive approach, but for one that acknowledges the blind spots and partial vision at the heart of the critical process. Sometimes, as critics, we too are 'Wandersmänner, whose bodies follow the thick and thins of a text [we] write without being able to read them.'[4] With words such as 'oblique,' and 'glancing,' Chambers invites his readers to adopt the *flâneur*'s mobile and partial viewpoint, which is a heuristic method in itself. The idea of collecting fragments, of connecting them to try to apprehend a larger space, context or concept is part and parcel of the critical process as evidenced by the emergence and dynamism of the field of cultural studies. This 'synecdochal' mode of apprehension is described by Michel de Certeau,[5] but is also part of Walter Benjamin's similar practice as a material historian: his goal is 'to assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components. Indeed, to discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event' (AP [N2, 6], 461). This 'synecdochal' method is still relevant to current critical practices. One may think of the status of the anecdote in New Historicism, which makes it possible for a gigantic field of research connecting literature and history to be manageable.

By highlighting the incomplete nature of his work and inviting his readers to fill in the gaps in his work, Chambers urges readers – and other critics – to let themselves be turned into

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everything that could possibly be said about' his field of research. 'Some years ago he had embarked with great enthusiasm on an ambitious critical project: a series of commentaries on Jane Austen which would work through the whole canon, one novel at a time, saying absolutely everything that could possibly be said about them. The idea was to be utterly exhaustive, to examine the novels from every conceivable angle, historical, biographical, rhetorical, mythical, Freudian, Jungian, existentialist, Marxist, structuralist, Christian-allegorical, ethical, exponential, linguistic, phenomenological, archetypal, you name it; so that when each commentary was written there would be simply nothing further to say about the novel in question. The object of the exercise, as he had often to explain with as much patience as he could muster, was not to enhance others' enjoyment and understanding of Jane Austen, still less to honour the novelist herself, but to put a definitive stop to the production of any further garbage on the subject. The commentaries would not be designed for the general reader but for the specialist, who, looking up Zapp, would find that the book, article or thesis he had been planning had already been anticipated and, more likely than not, invalidated. After Zapp, the rest would be silence. The thought gave him deep satisfaction. In Faustian moments he dreamed of going on, after fixing Jane Austen, to do the same job on the other major English novelists, then the poets and the dramatists, perhaps using computers and teams of trained graduate students, inexorably reducing the area of English literature available for free comment, spreading dismay through the whole industry, rendering scores of his colleagues redundant: periodicals would fall silent, famous English Departments be left deserted like ghost towns…' (David Lodge, *Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1975), 35.)

[4] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life 1*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 93.

[5] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 101-102. 'Synecdoche replaces totalities by fragments (a less in the place of a more); asyndeton disconnects them by eliminating the conjunctive or the consecutive (nothing in place of something). Synecdoche makes more dense: it amplifies the details and miniaturize the whole. Through these swellings, shrinkings and fragmentations, that is, through these rhetorical operations a spatial phrasing of an analogical composed of juxtaposed citations) and elliptical (made of gaps, lapses, and allusions) type is created.'

flâneurs as they enter his book. He beckons his readers in and invites them to 'inhabit' the book. This image of inhabiting, aptly conveyed by the metaphor of the reader as a hermit crab turning the shell of the book into a familiar space, is another flâneurial image. According to Benjamin, the *flâneur* has the ability to turn unfamiliar space 'into one great interior' (AP [M3, 2], 422). The idea of leaving 'gaps' or blank spaces for Chambers' readers to write ties in with his ambition to let his readers inhabit the space of the book, and thereby appropriate his writing. As critics, we constantly look for critical input in the writing of others. To use De Certeau's words, it is only through 'the networks of these moving, intersecting writings' shaped out of fragments that we as critics can compose 'a manifold story' through which new meaning will emerge. The idea of crossing, of bringing different references together, of coming across the writing of others and intertwining it within our own writing, is at the root of any critical work. The idea of criticism as 'work in progress' suggests that openness, too, is key to research. Critical works are always part of an on-going debate and of a larger field of discourse. Situating one's work within the critical topography is central to academic practices. Similarly, Chambers' insistence on the open structure of his work underlines the idea that research is a gradual and continuous process:

> This book is liberally supplied with prefaces. Indeed, it could be charitably described as nothing but a series of prefaces, each of which scarcely gets started on an approach to the topic of loiterature before another starts again from a different but related angle. As a book, it stops, without conclusion, while still in the process of going. That is certainly in accordance with loiterature's own affinity for potentially endless digressivity.[6]

Like the open city,[7] the open text makes for aimless wandering. It has a potential for digressiveness which Chambers also puts at the heart of his project. Following the *flâneur*'s haphazard walk through the city streets, Chambers rejects linearity, and insists that his argument is informed by digressiveness. Moreover, he refuses to impose a reading order on his readers, and invites them to become *flâneurs* by making their own winding way through his work. He gives his readers the freedom to make the connections they wish to make, and

[6] Chambers, *Loiterature*, xi.

[7] See Teju Cole, *Open City* (New York: Random House, 2011). This novel follows the *flâneries* of its narrator through the streets of New York and Brussels. Through the motif of his wandering footsteps and thoughts, this cosmopolitan *flâneur* emerges as a critical figure, which, once more, shows that the *flâneur* has adapted to new contexts and is operating within the field of contemporary literature and culture.

'to invent and follow' the paths they choose. This digressiveness hints at the fact that our critical practices do not always follow straight lines. It reminds us that research also relies on serendipity, on coming across new references by chance while walking through bookshelves, browsing through books or encountering other researchers. Just as the *flâneur* teaches us to select elements amongst the sensory overload engendered by city the space, *flânerie* can be envisaged as a way for the critic to apprehend the formidable quantity of information available on the world wide web. It might well be that critical thinking moves like De Certeau's walking subject. In making connections, it sometimes 'leaps, or skips like a child, hopping on one foot,' or at other times 'amplifies the details and miniaturize[s] the whole' – and through these swellings, shrinkings and fragmentations,'[8] new meaning emerges. As Frédéric Gros points out in his book about walking and philosophy, 'original thinking demands a form of offhandedness.'[9]

Finally, Chambers' chapter on *flânerie*, entitled '"Flâneur Reading:" On Being Belated,'[10] underlines the connection between *flânerie*, digressive modes of reading and belatedness. Critical thinking implies many twists, turns and returns. It calls for a form of loitering, a constant revisiting of those critical spaces and texts that most resonate with, or challenge, our research. Reading a text and loitering through other texts before retracing one's steps or going back to that original text after some time has elapsed – and understanding it belatedly – is part of the critical process. Very often, it is through this winding progression that meaning emerges. The word 'progress' in 'work in progress' also suggests that critical thinking needs time to wonder and wander. Thoughts need time to develop into fully-fledged concepts.

The omnipresence of flâneurial critical practices suggests that Benjamin still has an influence on us, but also shows that many critics have turned into *flâneurs* by appropriating, adapting and changing his *flâneurial* ways to fit their own modes of thinking. What this PhD has demonstrated is that the *flâneur* is not just a blueprint or codified entity, he is a constant series of minute adjustments to environment which modify him with each encounter, so that he is never the same creature. His 'phenotype' changes over time and space. Similarly, our

[8] De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 101-102.
[9] Frédéric Gros, *Marcher. Une Philosophie* (Paris: Carnets Nord, 2009), 38. 'Il faut de la désinvolture pour pouvoir penser loin.'
[10] Chambers, *Loiterature*, '"Flâneur Reading:" On Being Belated,' pp. 215-49.

critical practices are made of such a series of adjustments. In a sense, *flânerie* gestures towards a form of critical practice in which we weave together concepts and move through texts with ease as we go.

Illustrations

Figure 1. Paul Gavarni, 'Le flâneur,' in Léon Curmer (ed.), *Les Français peints par eux-mêmes*, 1841, engraving.

Figure 2. Paul Gavarni, Frontispiece of *Le Diable à Paris*, 1841, wood engraving.

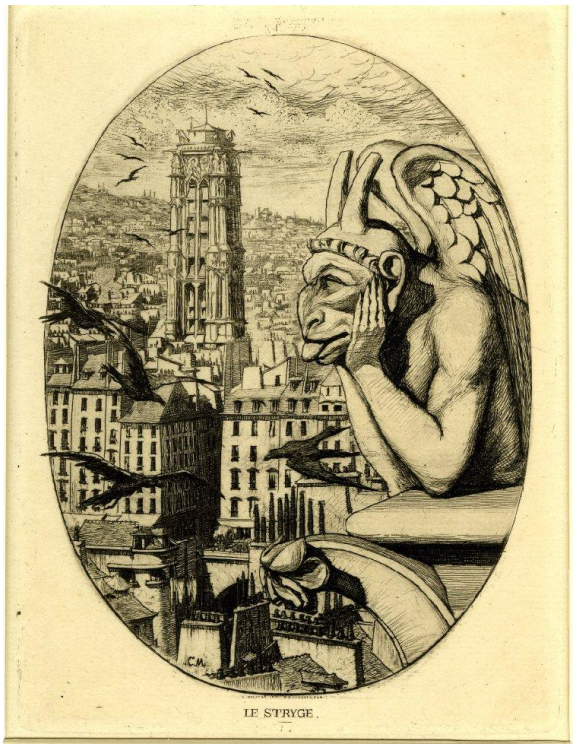

Figure 3. Charles Meryon, *Le Stryge*, 1853, etching, 17,2 x 13,2 cm, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris.

Figure 4. Charles Nègre, *Le Stryge*, 1853, calotype, gelatin-silver print, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Figure 5. George Cruikshank, Frontispiece of *Life in London*, 1821, hand-coloured engraving.

Figure 6. George Cruikshank, Frontispiece of *Sketches by Boz*, 1836, etching on paper.

Figure 7. George and Robert Cruikshank, 'Tom getting the best of a Charley (The Night Watchman) by Emptying Him from His Sentry Box Giclee', *Life in London*, 1821, hand-coloured engraving.

Figure 8. George Cruikshank, ‘Seven Dials’, *Sketches by Boz*, 1836, etching on paper.

Figure 9. George Cruikshank, ‘The Streets. Morning’, *Sketches by Boz*, 1836, etching on paper.

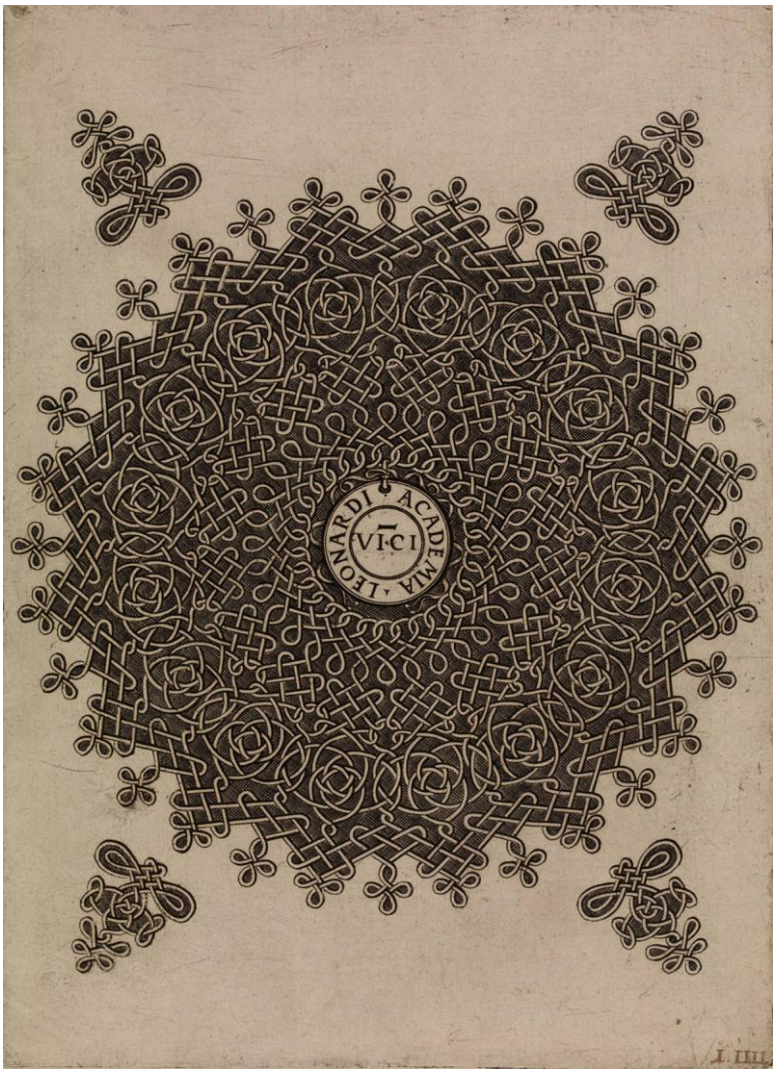

Figure 10. After Leonardo da Vinci, *Knot Pattern*, circa 1495, engraving, 29 x 21 cm, The British Museum.

Figure 11. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, ‘The Drawbridge’, plate 7 from *The Imaginary Prisons (Le Carceri d'Invenzione)*, Rome, 1761 edition (reworked from 1745).

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